

MARRIAGE, THE FAMILY, AND WOMEN IN THE
OWENITE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Starting from a deterministic theory of human character, the Owenite socialist movement of the early nineteenth century developed a comprehensive but highly unorthodox system of moral, economic, and religious philosophy. As a logically necessary deduction from this philosophy, they were led to reject the existing arrangements for marriage, the family, and relations between the sexes and to propose new arrangements that would be compatible with their moral, economic, and religious outlook. Because socialist views on these matters were incongruous with prevailing intellectual and social trends, their attempts to implement the views in practice met with little lasting success. Nevertheless, they made a significant contribution to social change in these areas as a result of the originality of their theories and experiments and their frankness in bringing the issues involved to public attention. As a further extension of their general philosophy, the socialists were among the earliest and most radical exponents of feminism in both Britain and the United States. The importance of the socialists' theoretical, propagandising, and practical contributions to feminism suggests the need to revise the traditional view that dates the rise of a conscious, organized feminist movement only from the period after 1850. Socialist attitudes to birth control are less clear, but their views upon women, marriage and sex suggest that they were probably sympathetic to its use. Two of the most eminent socialists did in fact make major contributions to the birth control movement, and in so doing they were clearly influenced by

socialist theories. Finally, socialist views upon marriage, the family, women, and birth control were closely connected with their views upon health, both mental and physical, and its relation to the social environment. On this question also, they made a highly original theoretical contribution.

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PREFACE

Much has been written on the remarkable career of Robert Owen, self-made industrialist, enlightened factory manager, philanthropist, educational reformer, pioneer socialist theorist, leader of the cooperative and trade union movements, and communitarian. Study of Owen and the movement that he inspired, who were the first group anywhere to call themselves socialists,^I has tended to emphasize the importance of their economic theories and their contribution to the cooperative, trade union, and communitarian movements in both Britain and America. Some attention has also been devoted to their moral, educational, and religious theories. The following chapters will attempt to examine an area of socialist theory and practical activity that has generally been neglected, namely that of marriage, the family, women, and birth control. It will be shown that socialist views in this important area were an integral part of their general system of thought and a logically necessary deduction from their moral, economic, and religious principles, but that these views were very much at variance with the intellectual and social trends of the early nineteenth century. However, it will be suggested that, through the originality of their ideas and practical projects, and through their fervor in propagating unorthodox views and attempting to implement them in practice, the socialists made a significant contribution to social change in the aforementioned areas.

- I. The term "socialists" is used throughout this thesis to designate the followers of Robert Owen in Britain and America. This usage is justified by the fact that the Owenites invented the word "socialist" during the 1820s and made it their own distinctive label in the middle 1830s. It was only after 1840 that the term gained a wider application (see Arthur E. Bestor Jr., "The Evolution of the Socialist Vocabulary", Journal of the History of Ideas, June 1948, pp. 259-302). For the sake of clarity, the terms "Owenite Socialists" or "Owenites" have been used where necessary, but frequent use of these terms has been avoided in accordance with the socialists' own dislike of eponymous labels.

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Chapter One

SOCIALIST MORAL, ECONOMIC, AND RELIGIOUS THEORY

Introduction. The Owenite socialists developed an elaborate and highly integrated ideology which is best considered in its totality, an undertaking beyond the scope of this thesis. However, before proceeding to an analysis of socialist views on marriage, the family, women, and related matters, it is useful to examine at least the general moral, economic, and religious theories that underlay these views.

Basic to the socialists' ideology was Robert Owen's theory that individual character was a product of inheritance and upbringing. Although this was by no means an original theory,¹ the conclusions that the socialists drew from it were certainly unconventional. They recognized that each individual, at birth, possessed a unique nature given to him by the creating power,² but believed that he could no more be held responsible for following the dictates of this nature than could any other animate or inanimate compound³. Moreover, they maintained that any individual could be infinitely varied after birth by environmental factors, over which he had no control. The socialists concluded, therefore, that social institutions erred in basing themselves upon human accountability. They reasoned that, by

1. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way: An Autobiography (1874. Reprinted, New York, 1967), pp. 104-105. Frank Podmore, Robert Owen: A Biography (1906. Reprinted, London, 1923), pp. 107-109.
2. The Times (London), Aug. 9, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Robert Owen, Two Memorials on Behalf of the Working Classes (1818), appendix 0 of A Supplementary Appendix to the First Volume of the Life of Robert Owen (London, 1858), p. 12; A New View of Society: or Essays on the Formation of the Human Character, 3rd Ed., (1817. Reprinted, Glencoe-Illinois, 1948?), pp. 110-112.
3. The Crisis (Vols. I-IV, April 1832 - Aug. 1834. Reprinted, New York, 1968), Feb. 9, 1833, pp. 35-36 (passages taken from Robert Owen's "Lectures on an Entire New State of Society"). Robert Owen, Two Memorials, p. 12.

modification of the environment and the educational process in its broadest sense, human nature could be greatly improved and almost any general character could be given to any community. The obvious means of introducing this modification was to transform such institutions as parliament, educational establishments, the church, the legal system, the media, and the family.⁴ The socialists condemned capitalist society, being governed for the benefit of the manufacturing and commercial interests and teaching individuals to acquire opposing religious, class, political, and national prejudices, as incapable of providing the material and moral circumstances necessary to improve the character of humanity⁵. To bring about such circumstances, they argued, a society based upon mutual sympathy and cooperation was necessary⁶.

Section 1. The Owenite socialists may be regarded as primarily moral reformers whose chief concern was the improvement of human character. They differed from other moral reformers of their time mainly in the extensiveness of their program⁷.

4. Crisis, May 26, 1832, p. 36; June 9, 1832, p. 45 (letter from "Philantropos"); June 16, 1832, p. 51; July 14, 1832, p. 72 (letter from "Philantropos"); Aug. 18, 1832, pp. 95-96; Feb. 9, 1833, pp. 35-36. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 19, 20, 28, 34, 91, 114-115, 145; Two Memorials, pp. 12-13; The Life of Robert Owen (1857-1858. Reprinted, London, 1920), p. 181.
5. The Times, Aug. 9, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Crisis, Aug. 25, 1832, p. 97 (letter from "Philantropos"). Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 29-30.
6. The Times, Aug. 9, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 33-36; "An Address to the Working Classes, April, 1819", appendix P. of Supplementary Appendix.
7. For example, Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 27, 64-66, 134-141, proposed reforms in the liquor laws, the State lottery (which fostered gambling among the poor), poor relief, and punishment, along with a national system of education and employment, and reform of the national church.

An example of the socialists' concern with moral issues was their opposition to retributive punishment on the grounds that it was illogical to punish those whom society had forced into a life of crime by environmental upbringing. They attributed moral responsibility for crime to legislators and governments who failed to remove the inducements to criminal acts⁸. The socialists proposed that society should educate its members with a sense of right and wrong, and in so doing appeal to the love of happiness on the assumption that the greatest happiness would be produced by the inward satisfaction and approval of others which resulted from acting rightly. They reasoned that an understanding of the causes of individuals' actions would not prevent public opinion from judging the quality of those actions, but would ensure that, when it was necessary to restrain an individual who endangered himself or others, he would be treated sympathetically and placed in the most favourable circumstances to effect his cure. After a few generations of rationality there would be few such cases⁹.

In his model factory town at New Lanark, which was the first practical attempt to implement socialist ideas, Robert Owen achieved an essentially moral reformation. Without resorting to legal punishment, he transformed a population that he claimed had been largely indolent, intemperate, immoral, and dishonest, prior to his management of the concern, into one that was honest, industrious, sober, and orderly. The children were well-trained; the population were generally healthy and happy, kind to each other, and tolerant of other religions; and there were few applications for

8. The Times, July 30, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Crisis, July 14, 1832, pp. 70-71. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 16, 40-41, 67-68, 135-136.

9. Crisis, May 26, 1832, pp. 33-34; July 24, 1832, pp. 70-71. Robert Owen, The Book of the New Moral World: in Seven Parts. (1842. Reprinted, New York, 1970), VI, 76.

parish relief¹⁰. Visitors were most impressed by the spirit of goodwill and happiness, and their reports tended to confirm Owen's assertion that the inhabitants formed a more genuinely religious community than in any other manufacturing establishment in the United Kingdom¹¹. As Owen's biographer, Frank Podmore observes, the sincerity and benevolence of Owen's character was reflected in all around and there was something other than the cash nexus to bind the community together¹².

New Lanark conformed to the socialists' view that social change should be adapted to local circumstances and should proceed gradually to allow time for reason to overcome long-established prejudices¹³. However, the socialists, unlike most other radical groups of their time, rejected the pursuit of reformist goals and considered even New Lanark inadequate for fulfilling their ultimately revolutionary objectives. Robert Owen was aware of the limitations of his experiment and he remarked that it was much more

10. Robert Owen, Life, pp. 79, 82-85; New View of Society, pp. 57-61; The Revolution in the Mind and Practice of the Human Race (1849. Reprinted, Clifton- N.J., 1973), pp. 27,29. Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 81-82. For details of how this transformation was achieved, see Robert Owen, New View of Society pp. 41-58, 80, 119-122; Life, pp. 85-88, 110-112, 187-191, 315. See also Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 91-99; Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 81-92, 160-172.
11. For example, a deputation from Leeds in 1819 commented upon the moral and material well-being and good moral character of the residents. They were also impressed with the good education of the children. See "Report of a Deputation from Leeds which Visited New Lanark in Aug. 1819", appendix R of Robert Owen, Supplementary Appendix. According to Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, p. 139, 20,000 names were recorded in the visitors book of New Lanark between 1815 and 1825. Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 172-173, observes that these visitors included princes, ambassadors, clergy, nobility, learned men and professionals from many countries, and that their comments generally confirmed Owen's claims.
12. Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 170-172.
13. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 29, 39, 41-62; Two Memorials, pp. 14-15; Life, p. 108.

difficult to change long-acquired habits than to train children from infancy. Further difficulties he cited were the constant contact with the outside world and the necessity of creating a profit for the managers. But above all he considered the very foundation of the institution to be in error since the workers were mere slaves at their employer's mercy, liable at any time to dismissal. Only amelioration of a fundamentally erroneous system was therefore possible at New Lanark¹⁴.

Such reasoning led Owen and his followers to abandon ameliorative schemes and to concentrate upon a total transformation of society through communitarianism.

The socialists attributed most of the moral and physical evils afflicting mankind to the system of individual competition¹⁵. Like many other early opponents of industrial capitalism, they believed that the lower classes had been better off and more independent prior to industrialisation¹⁶. They condemned the factory system as leading to long hours, infrequent holidays, unhealthy work conditions, premature employment of children before they acquired physical strength, mental

14. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 57-61, 79-80, 123; Life, pp. 108-110; Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 21.

15. Robert Owen, "Report to the County of Lanark, May 1, 1820", appendix S of Supplementary Appendix, pp. 24-25. William Thompson, An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth (1824. Reprinted, New York, 1963), pp. 379-380. Richard K.P. Pankhurst, William Thompson 1775-1833 (London, 1954), pp. 28, 58-59.

16. Crisis, May 25, 1833, p. 134 (report of lecture by Robert Owen). Robert Owen, Life, p. 136; "Notice, March 17, 1858", in Supplementary Appendix, p. 6; "Letter to British Master Manufacturers on the Employment of Children in Manufactories, March 30, 1818", appendix N of Supplementary Appendix; "Observations on the Cotton Trade, Jan. 1815", appendix F of Supplementary Appendix. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 345-346. Podmore, Robert Owen, p. 187.

instruction or domestic training, and a low standard of living due to competition reducing the value of manual labour. As a result, the producers of wealth were unhealthy, ignorant, immoral, and free labourers in appearance only¹⁷. Moreover, the socialists claimed that, in depriving the producer of most of the value of his labour, the system of exploitation hindered production by stifling incentive¹⁸. The main goal of the socialists was to replace these circumstances arising from the competitive system with others more conducive to improving human character. One early attempt at this was Robert Owen's campaign, launched in 1815, for a statutory limitation of the hours of child labour¹⁹. The socialists later renewed the campaign for factory legislation when, in 1833, they appealed to the working class to unite and secure an eight hour day by means of a general strike²⁰.

The socialists considered the competitive system harmful to the character of both the exploited and those engaged in business and commerce who, in the pursuit of profit, acquired the vices of greed, vanity and

17. Crisis, May 25, 1833, p. 134. Robert Owen, "Observations on Cotton Trade"; "Letter to British Manufacturers"; "Letter to the Earl of Liverpool, on the Employment of Children in Manufactories, March 20, 1818", appendix M of Supplementary Appendix; Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System (1815), appendix H of Supplementary Appendix, pp. 6-9.

18. Thompson, Inquiry, pp. 35-45, 78-103, 144-151. Pankhurst, William Thompson pp. 39-41.

19. Robert Owen, Observations on Manufacturing System, pp. 11-13; "Letter to Earl of Liverpool"; "Observations on Cotton Trade". For the provisions of Owen's proposed factory bill, observations of the bill's opponents, and details of the greatly diluted bill that was passed in 1819, see appendix G of Supplementary Appendix.

20. Crisis, Feb. 9, 1833, p. 39 (article by Robert Dale Owen); March 9, 1833, p. 66 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).

callousness²¹. They criticised capitalism for making selfishness and materialism the leading motives of life and private property the stimulus to individual exertion. In a cooperative society, they envisaged the prevalence of more moral motives to labour than the profit motive, such as the desire to benefit all and the honour of being a good workman²².

Socialist economic theories were in direct opposition to those of the political economists, whom the socialists regarded as the hierophants of capitalism and the upper class, observing that political economy had gained an undue dominance over government, theology, and public opinion²³. The socialists criticised the political economists for making the creation and accumulation of wealth the sole object of society and for treating man as an inanimate, insensate machine. They opposed the rigid separation of morality, political economy, and physical science, and proposed to unify the three in a "science of society" or "social science" directed towards the higher object of human happiness. They also contended that, by supporting individual competition and opposing cooperative industry, the economists defeated even their own limited goal of maximising the production of wealth. Moreover, the socialists objected to the obfuscation of the political economists who concealed the simple truth in elaborate

21. Robert Owen, New View of Society, p. 124; Book of New Moral World, VI, 40-41; Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 112; Life, pp. 122-123, 177; Observations on Manufacturing System, pp. 6-7; "Letter to British Manufacturers"; "Letter to Earl of Liverpool". Thompson, Inquiry, pp. 182-195.

22. Robert Owen, Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 112. Thompson, Inquiry, pp. 192-194, 516-518. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 54-55.

23. Crisis, June 1, 1833, p. 164 (editorial). Robert Owen, Life, p. 8.

argument. They felt that political economy should be plain, brief and practical for the people²⁴.

The political economists were prominent opponents of cooperative communities, claiming that they would increase population beyond the means of production. In reply, the socialists drew attention to the paradox of capitalism creating famine from a glut of industrial production and an abundance of uncultivated land while wealth was being squandered in wars and foreign investments. The socialists contended that the real limitation on food production was the principle of individual gain and the artificial law of supply and demand that arose from it. They defined real supply as all that land, capital, and the ingenuity of man could produce, and real demand as the wants of all the inhabitants. But, they maintained, production was regulated by the effective demand, which depended upon the condition of the people. When the working class were well paid for their industry and enjoyed the time and instruction to spend their wages judiciously, the country would prosper. Since existing arrangements prevented labour from obtaining an adequate reward, there was a crisis of underconsumption. The lack of a market coextensive with the means of production was, the socialists believed, the result of an uneven distribution of consumptive power, since the bulk of the new capital produced by machinery, and hence the bulk of effective demand, had been

24. Crisis, April 13, 1833, pp. 107-108 (editorial by Robert Dale Owen); June 1, 1833, p. 164 (editorial). Robert Owen, Life, pp. 143-144, 178-179. M. Beer, A History of British Socialism (1919. Reprinted, London, 1948), pp. 178-179. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 27-28.

engrossed by the rich²⁵.

To allow consumption to keep pace with production, the socialists proposed a sweeping reorganization of industrial and agricultural production, chiefly by the adoption of a labour standard of value in the exchange of the products of labour and the replacement of the plough by the spade in agriculture²⁶.

Section 2. The socialists contended that properly directed labour was the source of all wealth²⁷. The only equitable principle of exchange, therefore, was on the basis of the prime cost or value of labour in each article exchanged. But, with the multiplication of inventions and human desires, simple barter was succeeded by organized commerce whose principle was to produce or procure every article at the lowest, and exchange it for the highest, amount of labour possible. The socialists recognized that commerce, like barter, had been suited to a certain stage of social development. It had stimulated invention, industry, and talent, but it had also encouraged selfishness and deceit, and had urged man forward blindly to create whilst depriving him of the wisdom to enjoy²⁸.

25. The Times, July 30, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Crisis, July 27, 1833, p. 227 (report of lecture by Robert Owen); May 31, 1834, p. 61 (editorial). Robert Owen, Two Memorials, pp. 11-12; "Letter to British Manufacturers"; "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 5-6, 10; Life, pp. 176-177. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 254-255. Beer, British Socialism, pp. 178-179. It should be noted that the socialists were not alone among writers upon economic questions during this period in shifting the emphasis from production to distribution. See Thompson, Inquiry, p. 1, and Beer, British Socialism, p. 148.

26. Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 10-11.

27. Robert Owen, "Letter to Earl of Liverpool"; "Report to County of Lanark", p. 4.

28. Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 18-19.

Furthermore, under the system of commerce, the subsistence of the masses depended upon the nominal value of their labour, which fluctuated according to supply and demand. The introduction of the unlimited productive power of machinery, which hardly consumed at all, had created an unfavourable disproportion between the supply of and demand for manual labour, leading to poverty and misery for the masses and accumulation of wealth by the few²⁹. Commerce also entailed the introduction of an artificial standard of value, as a result of which industry, agriculture, and trade were restricted by the amount of comparatively useless metals. But the socialists objected equally to Bank of England paper currency, which placed the community at the mercy of a trading company that was largely ignorant of the power it wielded³⁰.

To resolve these difficulties, the socialists proposed a return to a natural standard of value. Articles would be exchanged with each other on the basis of the amount of manual and mental labour in each, equitably ascertained, through a convenient medium to represent this real and unchanging value, which would be issued only in proportion to the increase in real wealth. The socialists assumed that an average value of human labour and its amount in every article could be calculated³¹. In the early 1830s, the socialists attempted to implement this proposal by means of "equitable labour exchanges", in which products could be bought and sold on the basis of the amount of labour that had been invested in them expressed in terms of "labour notes". They envisaged that the exchanges

29. Robert Owen, Two Memorials, p. 16.

30. Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 9-10, 17-18; Revolution in Mind and Practice, pp. 52-53; Life, pp. 294-295, 321.

31. Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 8, 18-19.

would not only provide a currency and a market adequate for the distribution of the produce of labour, but would also eliminate the unproductive middlemen and capitalists by bringing the producer into direct contact with the consumer. Labour would no longer be dependent upon commercial fluctuations and would acquire its intrinsic value, which would increase with technological progress. Employment would be furnished for the unemployed and the profits of the exchanges would provide the working class with the time and means for education of themselves and their children. Unfettered by the restrictions of an artificial medium of exchange, real wealth would increase and would control its representative instead of the representative controlling wealth. And, since the power of consumption would now be evenly distributed among the producers of wealth, there would be no future lack of markets until the wants of all were supplied. Moreover, the exchanges would supersede the demoralising system of bargaining between individuals, and would make possible a personal integrity hitherto unknown in the various transactions of life³².

This transformation could be put into effect, the socialists contended, by the productive classes making their own money without waiting for the unproductive classes or government. The workers had the power of union and, as producers, they could withhold the means of comfort from any that used force against them. Furthermore, the socialists argued, none of the other classes, with their petty sectional interests, had the talent to legislate

32. Crisis, Aug. 18, 1832, p. 95 (book review); Sept. 15, 1832, p. 109 (article on Rothschild's money transactions), 114-115; Sept. 29, 1832; Oct. 6, 1832, p. 122 (letter from "J.D."). Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 8-9; Book of New Moral World, introduction, p. XXIV.

for the general good or to direct the vastly increased mechanical powers³³.

The chief means by which the socialists hoped to implement the principles of cooperative production and equitable exchange was that of communitarianism. But their communitarian ventures, in addition to furnishing a means of introducing cooperative industry, were also intended as a means of implementing socialist agricultural theories and of combating the growing differentiation of industry and agriculture.

The socialist press devoted much attention to agricultural improvement, frequently referring to the theories of various agriculturalists, such as Lord Lauderdale regarding the proper cultivation and use of vegetable foods by which he calculated that Britain could provide for 180 million inhabitants, Baron Cuvier regarding the production of food chemically without the aid of vegetation, and John Sinclair regarding the reclamation of waste land³⁴. The socialists were confident that the application of mechanical inventions to agriculture would increase productivity just as it had in manufacturing³⁵. By using chemical analysis and machinery, they claimed, it would be possible to produce any type of composition of soil,

33. Crisis, April 6, 1833, p. 97 (Robert Owen's comments upon his conference with delegates from the trade unions united to carry out the principles of the labour exchange); April 27, 1833, p. 125; May 18, 1833, pp. 146-148; July 27, 1833, p. 228 (editorial).

34. Crisis, May 31, 1834, p. 61 (editorial); Aug. 2, 1834, pp. 132-133 (editorial). Frequent articles appeared in the socialist press on such topics as agricultural techniques, fertilizers, crop science, soils, cultivation of waste land, spade husbandry, climatic modification, and social issues connected with agriculture such as the plight of the agricultural labourer. For example, see The New Moral World (Vols. I-XIII, Nov. 1834 - Sept. 1845. Reprinted, New York, 1969), Dec. 17, 1842, pp. 197-199, which devotes over two pages to spade cultivation. Similarly, the paper ran a series of articles on soils and soil science during 1840.

35. Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 261-262, 265-266.

and to bring a variety of waste lands into cultivation³⁶. It is worth noting also that a number of improving landlords were attracted to the socialist movement, including Archibald Hamilton of Dalzell, who had studied agricultural theory and who experimented with methods of soil cultivation,³⁷ and William Thompson of Glandore, the most important socialist theorist after Robert Owen, who effected great economic and moral improvements among his tenantry³⁸.

Of particular interest to the socialists were the possibilities of spade husbandry, first brought to the public attention by the successful experiments of William Falla of Gateshead³⁹. Indeed, Robert Owen proclaimed at one meeting that, instead of the millennium proceeding from the clouds, a great part of it would come from the spade⁴⁰. The socialists saw spade cultivation as a remedy for the unemployment in industry created by the misapplication of machinery. They asserted that the increased crop yield per acre resulting from the use of the spade rather than the plough would more than compensate for the increased cost of cultivation per acre, and that the resulting improvements in agriculture would be far greater even than those occasioned in manufacture by the introduction of the steam engine and spinning machine. Spade husbandry would also bring about a moral regeneration, since its labour-intensive nature would require the reorganization of agriculture, trade, and

36. Crisis, Aug. 2, 1834, pp. 132-133 (editorial).

37. J.F.C. Harrison, Quest for the New Moral World: Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America. (New York, 1969), p. 27.

38. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 5-8.

39. Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", has an account of Falla's experiment attached.

40. Crisis, Oct. 6, 1832, p. 121.

manufactures along cooperative lines⁴¹. This would entail the population dividing itself into communities large enough to enjoy the advantages of cooperative labour, communal facilities, and social intercourse, and to thereby avoid the problems of rural isolation. However, these communities would not be so large as to entail the economic, social, environmental, and aesthetic problems of large cities. Each community and all of its inhabitants, according to ability, were to engage in both agriculture and manufactures, and the community would be, as far as possible, self-sufficient. This decentralized arrangement would remedy the evil of overspecialization and make it possible for all to enjoy a pleasant and healthy environment and a sure supply of fresh and unadulterated food.

The socialists regarded cultivation of the land as man's original lot and, potentially, the source of his greatest happiness. They believed that, in a cooperative community, agriculture, combined with manufacturing, could be made profitable, instructive, healthy, and enjoyable. The need to labour would still exist in a socialist system, but labour would become increasingly refined and productive as science advanced. The socialists proposed that, henceforth, all should be trained to become physically or mentally productive and none should be maintained who were not contributing to the common stock. All would be happier engaging in moderate exertions than in living a life of excessive toil or excessive idleness. That man was not naturally adverse to labour was shown by the

41. Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 11-16. The socialists' advocacy of spade husbandry lasted from the 1820s until the collapse of the movement in the 1840s. For example, Crisis, Aug. 18, 1832, argued that spade husbandry would give immediate employment to the whole population and proposed that the change should be effected by the parishes.

fact that the majority of those who were not obliged to work sought employment in literature, politics, gardening, or violent bodily exercise. In a socialist system, production would be organized in such a way that the natural powers and faculties of each individual would be fully developed and utilized to benefit all⁴². Central to this attitude toward labour was the socialists' conviction that the application of science and technology to agriculture and industry would make the task of production a delightful experience so that there would be no objection to each producing as much as he consumed⁴³.

Section 3. Although the socialists were sensitive to the regrettable effects of industrialism, they realized that technological progress was irreversible and they were optimistic as to its ultimate potential to benefit the whole population rather than merely the privileged few⁴⁴. Robert Owen asserted that, in the late eighteenth century, the new manufacturing system had attained the point which gave the highest value to manual labour compared to the price of necessities and comforts and had not yet introduced its demoralizing effects. Thereafter, the introduction of new machinery increased the difference between manual and mechanical power, thereby depreciating the value of labour and resulting in poverty, long hours, and women and child labour. Owen

42. Crisis, July 14, 1832, p. 97 (letter from "Philantropos"); March 30, 1833, p. 90 (report of lecture by Robert Owen); May 18, 1833, pp. 146-147 (manifesto of the productive classes), 148 (report of lecture by Robert Owen); Aug. 2, 1834, pp. 132-133 (editorial). Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 5.

43. Indeed Robert Owen believed the major problem in the new system would be too little work, since men had not yet the refinement to spend their leisure time well. He suggested that at first it would be necessary to arrange for eight hours of work a day, devoting two hours to the improvement of the mind, and lessening the hours of labour as improvement progressed. See Crisis, March 22, 1834, p. 246.

44. Robert Owen, Observations on Manufacturing System, p. 5; "Observations on Cotton Trade".

believed that every technological advance increased productivity but, because of the uneven distribution of consumptive power, this only led to markets becoming overstocked, thereby necessitating a decrease in supply. And, since mechanical power was cheaper than human labour, the latter was superseded and wages were driven down even below subsistence level by competition for employment, thus diminishing demand still further. Mechanisation, potentially the greatest of blessings to humanity, became its greatest curse under the competitive system. But, if the power of consumption was redistributed through equitable exchange and if the productive powers of the idle, unemployed, or inefficiently employed were brought into use by new arrangements in industry and agriculture, an incalculable addition might be made to the wealth of society by the application of machinery, which would then be made subservient to labour rather than being applied to supersede it⁴⁵.

The socialists assumed that, with the aid of science, wealth might be created in all parts of the earth more than sufficient to satisfy all human needs⁴⁶. They were concerned whether this new wealth would be wasted in warfare or used for the welfare of the people⁴⁷. Only cooperation, they argued, could retain the benefits of mechanisation, enabling costs to

45. The Times, April 9, 1817 (Mr. Owen's report to the Committee of the Association for the Relief of the Manufacturing Poor); July 30, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen); Aug. 22, 1817 (report of address by Robert Owen at the City of London tavern). Robert Owen, Two Memorials, pp. 9-10; "Letter to Earl of Liverpool"; "Report to County of Lanark"; "Notice, March 17, 1858". Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 248-255. Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 215-217.

46. Robert Owen, Two Memorials, pp. 6, 9, 11; "Report to County of Lanark", p. 4. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 30-33.

47. Robert Owen, Two Memorials, pp. 10-11. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, p. 245.

fall and human drudgery to be minimised, without attendant evils⁴⁸. They contended that, although men were at that time less happy than their simple and ignorant ancestors, they had accumulated much greater means of enjoyment as a result of progress in knowledge, arts, and sciences. Under the competitive system, every "improvement" was perverted to evil. The rapid progress of knowledge, therefore, made the need for socialism still more pressing and was valuable only in so far as it increased the difficulties for the competitive system and hastened the change. Technological advance merely sharpened the contradictions in the old society so as to make the adoption of a cure come quicker⁴⁹.

Poverty and unemployment were unnecessary according to socialist economic theory. The socialists considered economic deprivation unnecessary even at the existing productive capacity, but conceded that, were existing wealth to be equally distributed, it would be insufficient to support the whole population in the same luxury as the aristocracy then enjoyed. But they contended that, with the large areas of waste land brought into cultivation, with the physical and intellectual resources of the whole community employed in productive activity, with the introduction of new technology unhindered by the competitive system and directed into the production of useful goods, and with labour properly trained and directed and aided by technology in a cooperative system of production, there would be a sufficiency of all comforts and luxuries for the whole population and

48. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 108-109. The socialist press often discussed mechanisation in such terms, as in Crisis, Aug. 4, 1832, p. 88 (letter from "Philantropos") and Aug. 11, 1832, p. 90. Technological improvements were frequently reported upon favourably, an example being the opening of the Leicester and Swannington railway, discussed in Crisis, Aug. 4, 1832, p. 87.

49. Crisis, Aug. 11, 1832, p. 90; Nov. 3, 1832, p. 139 (article by Thomas Macconell upon the railroad from Bristol to London); April 27, 1833, pp. 125-126 (article by Robert Dale Owen); May 25, 1833, p. 154 (article by Robert Owen).

for any foreseeable population increase. Until the whole of the resources of the land and sea were fully utilised, each child born would bring into the world the means to produce far more than he could consume⁵⁰.

Along with the socialists' faith in the benign potential of technology went a keen interest in the sciences, through which, they believed, the laws of the universe could be determined and the situation of the human race improved. The socialist press contained regular and detailed articles on the sciences, including physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, geography, engineering, medicine, and more controversial subjects such as phrenology, mesmerism, and animal magnetism, whilst regular lectures on science were given in the socialist branches⁵¹. Prominence was given to science in the socialists' community projects, particularly at Robert Owen's ambitious venture at New Harmony, Indiana, during the 1820s, where a great deal of scientific talent was assembled. Robert Owen had been interested in science since his youth,⁵² and this interest was inherited by his sons, Robert Dale and David Dale. David Dale Owen became

50. The Times, April 9, 1817 (Mr. Owen's report); July 30, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Crisis, May 31, 1834, p. 61 (editorial); June 7, 1834, pp. 68-69 (editorial). Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 174-175; Two Memorials, pp. 13-14; "Report to the County of Lanark", p. 4; Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 122.
51. In the winter of 1832-1833, for example, regular lectures were delivered at the Socialist Institution in London by Mr. Saull of the Geology Society; Mr. Rogers, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania; Mr. Hiscok, who lectured on astronomy; David Dale Owen, who lectured on chemistry and geology; and Robert Dale Owen, who lectured on geography. See Crisis, Dec. 8, 1832, p. 159; Dec. 15, 1832, p. 164; Dec. 22, 1832, p. 165; Jan. 5, 1833, p. 176.
52. See the account in Life, pp. 49-50, of Owen's friendship with the chemist, John Dalton, in Manchester during the 1790s, and the accounts of his participation in the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society in Life, pp. 50-51, and Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 55-61.

a prominent geologist and chemist, and it was largely due to his work that New Harmony became the chief educational and scientific centre in the west for more than a generation after Robert Owen had abandoned the community⁵³. Many other socialists shared this interest in science, such as William Thompson, an ardent student of chemistry who lectured on this and other sciences⁵⁴.

Owenite views on science may to some extent have been reinforced by the theories of the French social philosopher and reformer, Claude Henri, Comte de Saint-Simon, and his followers⁵⁵. Also, a great impression was made upon the Owenites by the American reformer, J.A. Etzler, whose work entitled The Paradise, Within Reach of all Men, Without Labour, by the Powers of Nature and Machinery was published in 1833. It outlined a state of society similar in its results to the "social system" of the socialists, but to be obtained by an original method. Etzler proposed that the powers of nature, including the winds, tides, waves and the heat of the sun, be harnessed and utilized to operate various mechanical devices that would supplant the labour of man. Once harnessed, these natural forces would require very little superintendence. Etzler and his associates were fecund with plans for mechanical devices utilizing such forces. Exceeding even the Owenites in their optimism, they claimed that, as soon as all should become cordially united, the whole world could within ten years become a paradise and all be maintained in comfort with little human

53. Richard William Leopold, Robert Dale Owen: A Biography (Cambridge - Mass., 1940), p. 141. Podmore, Robert Owen, p. 331.

54. Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 8.

55. John Goodwyn Barmby, writing in the New Moral World, Jan. 23, 1841, pp. 45-47, observed that the Owenite socialists held the Saint-Simonian doctrine of the religion of science without being acquainted with its origin.

labour, by the powers of nature and machinery⁵⁶.

Much as the socialists were impressed by the potential benefits of progress in physical sciences and technology, they believed that progress in the "moral" or "social" sciences would prove a hundredfold more valuable, by revealing the working of social forces and making possible the eradication of social ills and the inauguration of an era of universal happiness and well-being⁵⁷. They considered themselves to be researchers engaged in the theoretical and experimental investigation of this "science of society", and they were among the pioneers of the methodology of devising hypotheses to explain the workings of human society and then conducting practical experiments aimed at testing these hypotheses.

Section 4. While a significant minority of the socialists were able to reconcile their doctrine of character with some form of Christianity, and an equally significant minority were uncompromising atheists, the majority, including Robert Owen, are best described as agnostics, deists, or secularists⁵⁸. They believed that man could have no certain knowledge of the power that controlled the universe, but that the very fact of existence implied an all-pervading cause of motion and change. However, they reasoned that, if this power had wished to make the nature of its existence known to man, it would have enabled him to comprehend it without

56. New Moral World, Nov. 21, 1835, p. 26; Feb. 13, 1836, p. 125. Robert Owen recommended Etzler's book to his followers in a public lecture reported in Crisis, May 17, 1834, pp. 42-43. A series of extracts from the book appeared in New Moral World, and the paper was still giving coverage to Etzler's ideas during the 1840s. For details of Etzler's schemes, see W.H.G. Armytage, Heavens Below (Toronto, 1961), pp. 185-188.

57. Crisis, March 9, 1833, p. 65 (report of lecture by Robert Owen); May 11, 1833, p. 143 (report of lecture by Robert Owen). Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 4. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, pp. 78-87.

58. For example Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 76, 192-194, designated his father as a deist or free-thinking unitarian.

mystery or doubt. As this knowledge had not yet been given to or acquired by man, it was not essential to his well-being⁵⁹. It was evident to the socialists that, either this power wisely determined all things past, present, and future, or that all changes in the universe were the result of necessary chains of events. In either case, the actions of man, an insignificant being in comparison to the universe, could have not the slightest effect upon the eternal course of the governing power. It was, therefore, entirely irrational for him to attempt to understand the incomprehensible or to waste effort upon religious ceremonies and sectarian conflict⁶⁰. He should instead merely admire the governing power in silence and not degrade it by attributing to it the human form and passions⁶¹. The socialists maintained that man had no other rational means of showing his love for God than attaining the object of his existence, which was to be happy himself and to promote the happiness and well-being of others. Since they believed that this object could only be attained through the practice of unceasing love to all mankind and, as far as it was consistent with one's own safety, kindness to all living creatures, they considered universal love to be the basis of all true religion⁶².

59. Crisis, May 11, 1832, pp. 140-141 (report of lecture by Robert Owen). New Moral World, Nov. 28, 1835, p. 33 (editorial). Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, IV, 7; Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 107.

60. New Moral World, Nov. 28, 1835, p. 33 (editorial). Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, IV, 7-8; Revolution in Mind and Practice, pp. 106-107; Life, p. 286.

61. Crisis, May 11, 1832, pp. 140-141 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).

62. The Times, May 29, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Crisis, Aug. 31, 1833, pp. 261-262 (reprint of lecture delivered by Robert Owen at New Lanark on the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians). New Moral World, Nov. 28, 1835, p. 33 (editorial). Robert Owen, Life, pp. 141, 283, 289.

The hostility directed against the socialists by "respectable" society was not merely a result of these religious theories, which were at that time quite common among enlightened thinkers. It was provoked mainly by the socialists' open and uncompromising attack upon the world's organized religions, which they regarded as "so many geographical insanities"⁶³. They objected to sectarian religion firstly because it held the individual responsible for his character and beliefs and deserving of eternal reward or punishment for believing or disbelieving the doctrines of a particular system⁶⁴. Secondly, sectarian religion was, they maintained, the strongest cause of alienation between individuals and nations and was, therefore, incompatible with universal charity and love⁶⁵. Thirdly, the socialists criticized all sectarian religions for propagating irrationality and encouraging supernatural fears, upon which the priesthood based its power, thereby hindering intellectual enquiry⁶⁶. Fourthly, the socialists believed that calculations of the consequences of another world confused men's ideas of right and wrong, distracted their attention from the errors and abuses of this world, and made them willing to suffer unjust laws and tyranny in the hope of enjoyment hereafter. Moreover, they suggested that to do good or to abstain from evil merely because of

63. Debate between Robert Owen and the Rev. J.H. Roebuck quoted by Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, p. 193.

64. Robert Owen, New View of Society, p. 107.

65. The Times, Aug. 22, 1817 (report of address delivered by Robert Owen at the City of London tavern). Crisis, Dec. 1, 1832, p. 153, (report of speech by Robert Dale Owen at a socialist debate). Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 107-108; Book of New Moral World, III, 64; Life, pp. 140-141.

66. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 105, 107-108, 125; Book of New Moral World, III, 62; Revolution in Mind and Practice, pp. 106-107.

expectations of heaven or hell was to act from morally unworthy motives⁶⁷. Finally, the socialists condemned the mental oppression associated with organized religion which, they believed, made men afraid to express opinions opposed to the superstitions of the priesthood and violated the natural and inalienable rights of conscience⁶⁸. However, they rejected only those parts of the various religions that contradicted what they considered to be the facts and which were, therefore, obstacles to "genuine religion". They reasoned that, if the divine being had given an oral revelation in addition to the revelation of nature, the two must agree, since the test of truth is consistency. Any interpretation of the written revelation that opposed the evidence of the senses could not be a true interpretation and was in opposition to genuine faith and revelation. The socialists believed that this would ultimately prove as true with their theory of character formation as it had of the Copernican System⁶⁹.

Many socialists believed that their system was the best exposition of practical Christianity, founded upon the commandment to "love one another", and that it provided the means to put this commandment into practice. They claimed also that such doctrines as "natural depravity" and "eternal punishment" had not the slightest support from anything taught by Jesus or his immediate disciples⁷⁰. Robert Owen appears to have

67. Such views were, for example, expressed by various speakers, including Robert Dale Owen, Thomas Macconnell, and Gale Jones, at a debate held at the Socialist Institution in London, reported in Crisis, Nov. 24, and Dec. 1, 1832.

68. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 63; Life, p. 142.

69. Crisis, July 28, 1832, pp. 83-84 (letter from "An adherent of Divine Revelation").

70. Ibid.

regarded Jesus as a sincere reformer with aims somewhat similar to his own. He saw the first coming as a partial revelation of truth to the few, conveyed in parables and mysteries and mixed with errors. The second coming would, he believed, make the truth concerning the nature of man known to the many, openly promulgated and free from error. Being convinced that recent developments in science and factual knowledge, including the advances made by the socialists in the application of science to the understanding of human society, had made new arrangements for society necessary, Owen asserted that the foretold millennium was about to commence⁷¹.

Other socialists followed Owen's lead in attempting to interpret the scriptures, or oral revelation, in the light of what they considered to be the revelation of nature. Thus "Boreas", writing in the socialist journal, the Crisis, equated St. Paul's teaching that we are all members of God's body and Christ's teaching that the time would come when men would be one with God, with the "social system" where the reign of division would cease⁷². And "T.F." in the same journal interpreted the story of Cain allegorically as relating to the introduction into the world of individual property and its associated strife and distress⁷³. Most elaborate of all the attempts to reconcile the scriptures with socialist doctrines was that made by James E. Smith, a Christian Owenite and editor of the Crisis during 1833-1834, who developed complex theological justifications

71. Crisis, Sept. 7, 1833, pp. 2-3 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).
New Moral World, Nov. 1, 1834, p. 1.

72. Crisis, Feb. 8, 1834, pp. 198-199 (article on "Idolatry" by "Boreas").

73. Ibid, p. 199 ("The rights of property, or Cain, a mystery explained" by "T.F.").

for socialism based upon the scriptures⁷⁴. Smith was one of many Christians who were active participants in the socialist and cooperative movements. Among the others were the wealthy philanthropist, John Minter Morgan, who was one of Robert Owen's earliest and most consistent supporters, and Lloyd Jones, who was one of the most active socialists during the 1830s and 1840s⁷⁵.

On the other hand, the socialist movement also contained a significant and vocal minority of thoroughgoing secularists or atheists. The question as to whether socialist lecturers should become registered as protestant ministers to suit the legal requirements regarding Sunday public lecturing split the movement in 1841. Lloyd Jones and Robert Buchanan, two of the first six full-time "missionaries" appointed by the socialists in 1838, actually took this step but were opposed by the more militant secularists such as Charles Southwell, George Holyoake, William Chilton, and Malthus Ryall. While continuing to support the main socialist organization, which was at that time known as the Rational Society, the latter group simultaneously started their own movement and a journal, the Oracle of Reason. Eventually, this group evolved into

74. Crisis, May 4, 1833, pp. 129-130 ("A discourse delivered by Rev. Mr. Smith in the Rotunda, on the subject of a Christian Community"); July 27, 1833, pp. 225-227 (report of lecture on "Communion" by Smith); Sept. 14, 1833, pp. 12-15 ("to A.B. of Birmingham" by Smith).
75. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, discusses John Minter Morgan (pp. 34-36), Abram Combe (pp. 103-105), and John Finch (pp. 122-126), all of whom interpreted the prophesies of the Bible by reference to socialism. Many of the leading figures in the cooperative movement were inspired by Christian beliefs, including Dr. William King of Brighton, discussed by W.H. Oliver, "Robert Owen and the English Working-Class Movements", in History Today, Nov., 1958, p. 790. See also the speech of Rev. C.B. Dunn from Cumberworth, at a Sheffield cooperative meeting in June 1832, reported in Crisis, June 2, 1832, pp. 43-44, and the extract from a lecture by Mr. Hirst to the Leicester Cooperative Society in Crisis, June 23, 1832, p. 53.

the secularist and rational movement, while a number of the Christian Owenites, including Lloyd Jones, later became involved in the Christian socialist movement⁷⁶.

Section 5. The socialists availed themselves of every opportunity to put their religious theories into practice. As a result of their beliefs concerning character and responsibility, they were generally tolerant of rival viewpoints. They reasoned that, since man could not avoid being brought up in the religion of his region, it was cruel and unjust to prevent him from following his mode of worship⁷⁷. At New Lanark, Robert Owen encouraged all to attend to the essence of religion rather than to sectarianism⁷⁸. Impartial observers confirmed that Owen allowed freedom of conscience while encouraging the genuine principles of charity in everyday practice. As a result, religious animosity gave way to benevolence and harmony⁷⁹. The children attending the New Lanark schools read such books as promoted the Christian precepts that were common to all denominations⁸⁰. Similarly, at New Harmony there was complete religious freedom and those who wished were allowed to conduct religious services, the only restriction being that speakers were

76. Edward Royle, Radical Politics 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief. (London, 1971), pp. 45-49, 51. Joseph McCabe, Robert Owen (London, 1920), p. 108.

77. Robert Owen, Revolution in Mind and Practice, pp. 88-89.

78. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 53-54.

79. For example, see "Proceedings of the Committee under the Presidency of the Duke of Kent, to Investigate and Report upon Mr. Owen's plan, 1819", appendix Q of Robert Owen, Supplementary Appendix. See also, "Report of Deputation from Leeds".

80. Robert Owen, New View of Society, p. 56. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, pp. 200-201, tells us that his father not only excluded his own opinions from the schools, but also allowed brief portions of the scriptures to be read. Robert Dale Owen was given a free hand to say what he pleased in religious matters at the schools.

to avoid saying anything that might cause ill feelings or assault the religious prejudices of those present⁸¹. Religious tolerance was also evident in the composition of the socialist and cooperative movements, which included members and even clergymen, ministers, or preachers of most religious persuasions, orthodox or unorthodox⁸².

Following from their championship of individual religious conscience, the socialists were active in the struggle for mental liberty. In the United States during 1829-1831, for example, the socialists waged a vigorous campaign against superstition and in defence of free inquiry into any matter pertaining to the happiness of mankind. In New York City, they were led by Robert Owen's eldest son, Robert Dale, and by Frances Wright, a militant socialist and feminist who, along with the younger Owen, edited a socialist paper, the Free Enquirer⁸³. In Britain also, during the 1830s and early 1840s, the socialists waged a persistent struggle

81. Raymond Lee Muncy, Sex and Marriage in Utopian Communities: 19th Century America. (Bloomington-Indiana, 1973), p. 54.

82. Among the sixty delegates to a cooperative congress reported in Crisis, May 5, 1832, p. 18, were two Church of England clergymen, one Unitarian minister, three Methodist preachers, members of the Society of Friends, Swedenborgians, independent Methodists, and others. A Sheffield cooperative meeting, reported in Crisis, June 2, 1832, pp. 43-44, was chaired by a Rev. Mr. Nash and included another cleric, the Rev. Mr. Dunn, among its speakers. The issue of whether religion or irreligion should be connected with the cooperative movement could, however, sometimes cause a division of opinion. For example, see Crisis, Jan. 12, 1833, pp. 4-6; Feb. 9, 1833, p. 35. Among the cooperators who attacked Robert Owen's views on human responsibility and religion as tending to the breakdown of law and order and who opposed the introduction of such views into the socialist movement were many of the future leaders of the chartists. For example, see Crisis, Jan. 12, 1833, pp. 4-6, and the views of William Carpenter, discussed in Crisis, Feb. 23, 1833, pp. 55-56 and March 2, 1833, pp. 63-64.

83. A.J.G. Perkins and Theresa Wolfson, Frances Wright: Free Enquirer (New York and London, 1939), pp. 208-244. Leopold, Robert Dale Owen, pp. 65-84.

against the attempts of organized religion to stifle free inquiry and discussion. In the long term, the socialists wished to see the complete disappearance of the clergy⁸⁴. Meanwhile, they attacked the power that the clergy had over the minds and lives of the people, and opposed the injustice of tithes by which the poor were forced to build and maintain churches that they probably would not attend⁸⁵. The socialists also campaigned against the Sunday observance laws. Robert Owen proposed that the Sabbath should be a day of universal enjoyment rather than of superstitious gloom or of the destructive intemperance and licentiousness that often arose as a result of the lack of innocent amusement and recreation⁸⁶. On the same theme, Robert Dale Owen insisted that the government had no right to decide for any but themselves what was the command of God. He claimed that, in dictating the consciences of their fellows, the government were violating Christian law which was to "let every man be fully persuaded of his own mind" and to "judge not that ye be not judged"⁸⁷.

The socialists regarded the ceremonies performed by the clergy at christenings, marriages, and burials as ecclesiastical interferences for the purpose of obtaining money from the people⁸⁸. Therefore, they attempted

84. For example, see Crisis, March 9, 1833, pp. 65-66 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).

85. This issue was often raised in the socialist press, as in Crisis, Aug. 18, 1832 (articles on "New chapels and churches", pp. 93-94, and the Birmingham vestry meeting, p. 94). At the Birmingham meeting William Pare, secretary to the London Cooperative Congress, successfully opposed the payment of compulsory tithes. It was suggested in Crisis, Oct. 20, 1832, p. 122, that church livings should die with the present occupants so that the church would be supported by voluntary subscriptions, as were the dissenting interests.

86. Robert Owen, New View of Society, pp. 85-89.

87. Crisis, Nov. 3, 1832, p. 139 (article by Robert Dale Owen on "British legislators").

88. Crisis, Nov. 10, 1832, pp. 142-143.

to provide alternatives to all the symbolic religious functions relating to a person's life cycle. Accounts in the socialist press of deaths among their comrades frequently emphasized the serenity of mind of the "infidel" at the time of death⁸⁹. Apparently, there were often attempts by the clergy to interfere before and after death, against the wishes of the dying socialist to be buried without funeral pomp or religious ceremonies. One suggested solution was to set aside a burial ground for cooperators. "Social funerals" were sometimes held, at which the local socialist branches buried their dead comrades. Such funerals were generally simple, on the grounds that extravagance in respect to the dead was inconsistent with socialism, whose end was to produce happiness for the living. Nevertheless, these ceremonies, which included socialist hymns and graveside sermons, had the effect of removing the gloom usually associated with such occasions⁹⁰. On a larger scale were the trade union funerals, evidently the result of socialist influence, which could involve massive processions, bands and choirs⁹¹. Concerning the custom of christening, Robert Owen adopted the practice of naming the children of his followers at the end of his Sunday lectures⁹². By the late 1830s,

89. For example, see New Moral World, May 18, 1839, p. 479; May 25, 1839, p. 488; June 8, 1839, pp. 517-518; June 22, 1839, pp. 548-549; March 14, 1840, pp. 1165-1166.

90. See for example, the letter from "A Female Observer", New Moral World, Aug. 4, 1838, p. 327, on the subject of a social funeral she had witnessed in London. See also the letters in the same journal from Wm. Mavity (Sept. 29, p. 400) and Mr. Alger (Oct. 13, p. 416), discussing this funeral.

91. For example, see the report of a funeral of a brother from the linen operatives union of Barnsley, in Crisis, March 23, 1834, pp. 255-256. On the subject of these funerals, see also Eileen Yeo, "Robert Owen and Radical Culture", Chapter 5 of S. Pollard and J. Salt (eds.), Robert Owen: Prophet of the Poor (London, 1971), pp. 102-103.

92. For example, see Crisis, Aug. 19, 1834, p. 140.

such "christenings" were being performed by any "social missionary" or local lecturer, male or female, thus abolishing the mystique and cost of the ceremony⁹³. There were also socialist marriage ceremonies, which will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition, the traditional ceremonial year was, according to Eileen Yeo, adapted to socialist purposes. There were major social festivals at Christmas, New Year, Lent, Easter, and Whitsun, and wherever possible the most solemn holy days were turned into occasions for the maximum hilarity⁹⁴.

During the 1830s, the socialist movement increasingly adapted the features of a religious sect to its own purposes. In July 1832, a Social Missionary and Tract Society was formed, of which Robert Dale Owen became the president, having the purpose of propagating socialist principles. This body formed "missions" near the metropolis, distributed tracts and the Crisis, and held weekly discussions for its members⁹⁵. As the socialist movement grew in membership and influence, funds were collected for mutual assistance, education, and the foundation of communities, and by the late 1830s a substantial sum of money had been amassed. This enabled the appointment of an increasing number of paid, full-time "social missionaries" to preach the gospel. The local branches, beginning with Sheffield in July, 1840, began to open "Social Institutes" or "Halls of Science", in which were held Sunday services modeled on those of

93. Yeo, "Radical Culture", p. 101.

94. Ibid, p. 99.

95. Crisis, July 21, 1832, p. 73; Nov. 3, 1832, pp. 136-137 (report of the secretary of the Social Missionary and Tract Society).

the Church of England. "Social hymns" were sung and Robert Owen's Book of the New Moral World provided a Bible⁹⁶. Similar tendencies were apparent, to a lesser extent, in the American Owenite movement during the 1840s.

Some historians have attempted to fit socialist ideas, attitudes, and vocabulary into the pattern of early nineteenth-century millennialism⁹⁷. A number of the leaders of socialism in both England and America had associations with millennial sects; the socialists often used similar language to the millennialists; and many socialists equated the millennium with the establishment of a society based on cooperation. J.F.C. Harrison explains these similarities between socialists and millennialists as a result of the socialists' need to communicate their views in the language of an age in which active millennialism was an important feature of the cultural milieu. But probably the closest explanation was that provided by James Smith, who was an authority on millennial and messianic movements. He was aware that religious ultra-fanatics and infidel ultra-liberals were closer to each other than their respective followers realized. Both were regarded as visionaries by the world; both held unorthodox views upon community of goods, crime and punishment, and marriage; and both were levellers contributing to the overthrow of existing institutions which were supported by the establishment of dissenting interests⁹⁸.

96. Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 445-471. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, p. 136.

97. W.H. Oliver, "Owen in 1817: the Millennialist Moment", Chapter 8 of Pollard and Salt (eds.), Robert Owen. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, pp. 92-139.

98. Crisis, Aug. 24, 1833, pp. 266-267 and Aug. 31, 1833, pp. 275-276 (lectures on prophecy by James Smith).

Section 6. The socialists' views concerning character and religion focused their attention upon improvement of the known world rather than speculation as to the nature of the afterlife. As a result, it was necessary for them to define a moral purpose of life that would take the place of the expectation of reward or punishment in the hereafter as a motive for action. In most socialist writings, the pursuit of happiness, by seeking pleasure and avoiding pain, was taken as the ultimate purpose of life and the immediate cause of all living movements⁹⁹. Socialist theoreticians such as Robert Owen, James Smith, William Thompson, and Frances Wright subscribed to a morality which defined virtue as whatever produced happiness to the human race and vice as whatever brought misery¹⁰⁰. Such views reflected the influence of the utilitarians upon the socialists¹⁰¹. However, the socialists differed from the utilitarians in their belief that individual happiness could only be attained by conduct that would promote the happiness of all within the community and by mutual interchanges of benevolent affections¹⁰².

99. Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 11 (footnote), 245. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, pp. 47-48. For examples of socialist writing on this topic, see Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 1-2, and Crisis, June 29, 1833, pp. 193-194.

100. For example, see Perkins and Wolfson, Frances Wright, p. 194, and Crisis, March 9, 1833, pp. 65-66.

101. Several of the leading socialist theorists, including Robert Owen, had personal contact with Jeremy Bentham and his followers. Robert Dale Owen, Threading My Way, p. 201, cites Bentham as being his favourite author during his young manhood - "From him and from my father I accepted the theory that utility is the test and measure of virtue". Frances Wright and William Thompson both had close personal contacts with Bentham. See Perkins and Wolfson, Frances Wright, pp. 58-60, and Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 14-20.

102. Crisis, Oct. 6, 1832, p. 124 ("A rational catechism" by W.H. Sturges). Robert Owen, New View of Society, p. 22; Book of New Moral World, III, 49-50.

The moral, economic, and religious theories outlined in the foregoing pages formed only a part of the complex of ideas propagated by the Owenite socialist movement. However, they include most of the basic principles and assumptions that underlay the socialists' views on the topics dealt with in the following chapters.

Chapter Two

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Section 1. In their critique of existing society, the Owenite socialists concentrated upon religion, the competitive system, and marriage. While many of their views on religion and the competitive system were shared by others, their attack upon marriage and the family was particularly at odds with the prevailing intellectual and social climate.

The effect of the industrial revolution on the family in Britain prior to 1850 is still a controversial subject. The increasing economic well-being of the middle class and dramatic improvements in the home environment probably strengthened the middle-class family during this period¹. The effect on the working-class family was less clear,² but industrialisation provided higher living standards for certain categories of workers, and the possibilities of homemaking were improved when industry moved from home to factory. Against these gains for the family must be set the widespread insecurity produced by the decline of traditional industries, along with economic fluctuations in the industries that replaced them and the problems of housing, sanitation and health occasioned by rapid urbanization. Moralists of the time lamented the moral laxness, which they attributed to the destruction of the home as an economic unit, the breakdown of both parental discipline and the moral sanctions typical of rural communities, and the overcrowding, brutality and squalor of urban life. However, as O.R. McGregor points out, this laxness "...was no more than persistence, in a new world,

1. O.R. McGregor, Divorce in England (London, 1957), pp. 63-65.

2. Ibid, pp. 75-81.

of old habits which urban life and investigating civil servants exposed to open view"³. Ivy Pinchbeck observes that, in the factory population as a whole, the proportion of married women who worked was probably far too small to justify the statement that the factory system destroyed the home life of workers generally. The majority of female factory workers were single. Moreover, the standard of domestic economy was low everywhere among the agricultural, domestic and factory working classes, due to lack of education and training and the pressures of the struggle to earn a living⁴.

Neil Smelser has analysed the pressures placed upon the traditional family structure of textile workers as a result of succeeding structural changes in the textile industry during the industrial revolution⁵. He attempts to show a relationship between the dissatisfaction this caused among various groups of textile workers and the support these groups gave to the destruction of property, strikes, parliamentary reform agitation, and socialism, all of which were, he claims, attempts to return to a less differentiated community⁶. The declining craftsman and artisan class were hardest hit by industrialization and, since much of the factory work was initially done by women and children, the adult male weaver could even be displaced from his role as breadwinner.

3. Ibid, pp. 79.

4. Ivy Pinchbeck, Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850, (London, 1930), pp. 309-310. A fuller discussion of the effects of factory work upon the home is to be found in Margaret Hewitt, Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry, (London, 1958). See also Harold Perkin, The Origins of Modern English Society, (London, 1969), pp. 149-160.

5. Neil J. Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution, (London, 1959), pp. 184-209.

6. Ibid, pp. 227-263.

This group was particularly attracted to socialism⁷. The male factory operatives, on the other hand, were generally less attracted, except during the years 1833 to 1835 when they also faced disturbances that were disequilibrating to their family economy⁸.

According to Smelser's interpretation, the appeal of socialism was largely based on its promise to provide solutions for particular problems resulting from the pressures that the industrial revolution put upon the family structure of certain groups of workers. It could further be argued that socialism promised to supplement the working-class family in many areas in which it was proving inadequate. For example, the problem of domestic inefficiency among working women could be resolved by the adoption of communal domestic arrangements and responsibility for the raising of children. Similarly, communitarianism could provide the individual with an alternative to dependence upon family and kin for support in case of unemployment, sickness, old age, the need for accommodation, and the need for information. The frequency of such "critical life situations" was, according to Michael Anderson, a major reason why most people continued to maintain important relationships with the family and kin both before and after marriage, despite the breaking down during the first half of the nineteenth century of the traditional forces making for the continuance of family bonds, such as economic dependence, community enforced moral sanctions, and the church⁹.

While a case could therefore be made that shortcomings in the family economy of the working class led many to seek an alternative in

7. Ibid, pp. 209-212, 245, 257-260.

8. Ibid, pp. 259-260.

9. Michael Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire (Cambridge, 1971).

socialism, this does not explain why the socialists should consider it essential to attack marriage and the family. Nor does it account for the support which was given to this attack by middle-class and better-off working-class socialists. Despite the difficulties faced by the families of domestic workers, the family remained strong and was seldom questioned outside of socialist circles. Indeed, support for the existing institutions of marriage and the family continued to grow in the first half of the nineteenth century. As McGregor points out, the Victorians were more family conscious than any other generation in British history, and the integrity of the family was held to be the foundation of stable social life¹⁰.

The socialists' attack upon marriage and the family was not, therefore, a response to a broadly perceived social problem or a commonly expressed desire for reform. Rather, it was a logically necessary extension of their views on religion, morality, and economics, reinforced by an empirical conviction that the circumstances produced by existing arrangements for marriage and the family were harmful to human character.

Section 2. Established religion, private property and the existing marriage laws were so intimately interconnected, according to the socialists, that they would stand or fall together. Religion licensed the appropriation of all property by a few rich males and the exploitation by them of the poor, while marriage gave this elite the same privilege over women that they enjoyed over property. While appropriating females of their own class for propagation, these males used their wealth and position to

10. McGregor, Divorce in England, p. 60.

obtain lower-class women for sexual enjoyment¹¹. Confident they were making great progress in their struggle against established religion and Malthusian political economy, the socialists embarked, during the 1830s, upon a serious attempt to undermine the existing marriage arrangements, which they saw as the remaining and most powerful prop of the system of private interests¹². They also realized that communitarianism could not succeed without reform of a marriage system that put individual family interests above those of the community and necessitated extravagant arrangements for the private accommodation of each family¹³. Moreover, the socialists were aware of the importance of the family in transmitting the cultural values of existing society to the younger generation¹⁴. Such considerations prompted Robert Owen to deliver a series of Sunday lectures on marriage in the mid 1830s. These lectures, later issued as a pamphlet, helped to promote a discussion of marriage and sex within the socialist movement that was unusually frank for its time¹⁵.

Following from their views on human character, the socialists opposed the marriage laws as being based on the incorrect supposition that one could love, hate or be indifferent at pleasure. Since individuals were

11. New Moral World, Jan. 10, 1835, p. 84, and Feb. 7, 1835, pp. 113-115 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage); Aug. 18, 1838, pp. 347-348. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 55-56 (summary of Robert Owen's "Declaration of Mental Independence", delivered at New Harmony on 4th July 1826). Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 63-64.

12. New Moral World, Jan. 17, 1835, pp. 89-91 (lecture by Robert Owen on marriage); Aug. 18, 1838, pp. 347-348.

13. Crisis, May 18, 1833, p. 148. New Moral World, Jan. 31, 1835, pp. 105-108, and Feb. 7, 1835, pp. 113-115 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage).

14. Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution, p. 159.

15. For example, see New Moral World, Feb. 7, 1835, pp. 113-115 (lecture by Robert Owen on marriage); Aug. 18, 1838, pp. 347-348.

compelled to such feelings by natural instincts, themselves a product of inheritance and upbringing, the attempt to control these feelings through legal or religious sanctions could only result in vice and misery¹⁶.

While existing society considered it virtuous for a married couple to cohabit even when instinctively disliking one another, the socialists regarded connection without affection, induced by law or custom, as itself a vice and a form of prostitution. To them, true virtue lay in forming sexual unions only when there was sincere affection and harmony of heart, soul, body and mind¹⁷. Couples should not, therefore, be required to perjure themselves before they could enjoy sexual relations, by declaring that they would love until death a person liable to perpetual change and for whom they might develop an antipathy¹⁸.

Since the marriage laws often compelled individuals to act contrary to instinct and affection, the socialists asserted that they often resulted in promiscuity, sexual crime, prostitution, mental and physical disease, or, in extreme cases and particularly among females, suicide¹⁹. The socialists were deliberately outspoken about prostitution and the related matter of venereal disease, issues which early nineteenth-century society preferred to hide, and they hoped thereby to shame the public and government into preventing the continuance of these evils²⁰. The socialists attributed

16. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, VI, 35; Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 85.

17. New Moral World, Jan. 17, 1835, pp. 89-91 and Feb. 7, 1835, pp. 113-115 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage).

18. Crisis, May 11, 1833, p. 141 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).

19. Crisis, May 11, 1833, pp. 143-144; May 18, 1833, pp. 145-146; May 25, 1833, p. 155 (report of lecture by Robert Owen). New Moral World, Jan. 10, 1835, pp. 81-83, Jan. 17, 1835, pp. 89-91, Jan. 31, 1835, pp. 105-108, Feb. 7, 1835, pp. 113-115, and Feb. 14, 1835, pp. 121-123 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage). Robert Owen, Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 85.

20. Crisis, June 28, 1834, pp. 91-93.

prostitution to the combined effects of the economic system, the inferior position of women, the moral and legal codes, and the institution of marriage. Women were driven to prostitution by economic necessity, which was a common result of private property and competition. The inferior position of women in society and lack of employment for them made it particularly hard for unmarried women to support themselves when forced to do so by loss of parents or economic hardship in the family. Christian morality and the law added to the number of women forced to fend for themselves by making outcasts of women who succumbed to seduction, while encouraging the seducers by treating them with a contrasting leniency, in spite of Christian teaching that women were the weaker sex. Finally, the marriage system created a demand for prostitutes, which was supplied by women who could find no other means of support²¹.

The socialists also saw the marriage system as harmful to the upbringing of children, who were liable to inherit the physical and moral imperfections that it induced in their parents. Furthermore the parents, having an excess of animal affection for their offspring while most often being ignorant of human nature, were not competent to take on alone the task of moulding their children's characters. In addition, single family arrangements taught the children to put their selfish family interests first and the resulting competition between families cultivated the inferior qualities and feelings at the expense of the superior. Division of property among the children upon the death of the head of the family encouraged the children to contend with rival families for advantages and even encouraged contention between children of the same family for the affection of the

21. Crisis, Aug. 11, 1832, pp. 89-90; Sept. 29, 1832, p. 119. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, VI, 38.

parents²².

Finally, the socialists criticised the existing marriage and family arrangements as tending to increase the inequality of wealth. If all parties were equally industrious, then barren couples would be rewarded with little care and with economic prosperity while prolific couples would be burdened with an excess of parental care along with economic hardship. Moreover, under the competitive system marriages tended to be motivated by financial considerations rather than by affection, at the cost of obstructing happiness²³.

Section 3. The socialists' attack on the marriage laws and on Christian morality was also influenced by their views on sex. In contrast to the prudish attitudes of most of their contemporaries, the socialists called for the same frankness in discussing sexual feelings as existed in discussing any other natural feelings or sensations, since all aspects of human nature contributed to happiness and no part of it should be considered inferior. Believing that communitarianism would never succeed until sexual relations were governed by candidness and sincerity, the socialists proposed that both males and females should from infancy be instructed in an accurate knowledge of themselves and of the opposite sex²⁴. The socialists pointed out that society did not attempt to artificially regulate such activities as eating, sleeping, or drinking, yet it regulated sexual relations, which were equally necessary to the existence, health and happiness of the species, by enforcing artificial union of the sexes.

22. New Moral World, Dec. 27, 1834, pp. 65-68, Jan. 17, 1835, pp. 89-91 and Feb. 14, 1835, pp. 121-123 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage).

23. Crisis, April 21, 1832, p. 8 ("Misnomers" by "E.N."). New Moral World, Dec. 27, 1834, pp. 65-68 (lecture by Robert Owen on marriage).

24. New Moral World, Jan. 10, 1835, pp. 81-83, Jan. 17, 1835, pp. 89-91, and Feb. 7, 1835, pp. 113-115 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage).

The example of the animal kingdom, where sexual intercourse was natural and unrestricted by an artificial marriage system and where, as a result, sexual crime and prostitution were unknown, suggested that nature, when left to herself, directed sexual relations as it directed every faculty of each creature, wisely for its own happiness²⁵.

Celibacy in either sex beyond the period designed by nature was not a virtue, the socialists argued, but was a crime against nature, productive only of psychological and physical disease²⁶. Along these lines William Thompson suggested that mankind's only rational object of living was to seek happiness by availing himself of all natural pleasures including sexual enjoyment, providing that, in so doing, he did not cause harm to himself or others. Moreover, he claimed that all these pleasures would be greatly increased in value in a cooperative system. In the case of sexual passion, the choice of partners, which in competitive society was restricted by class and by economic considerations, would become much wider, while the health, intelligence, and benevolence of all would be greatly increased so that their capacity to increase mutual happiness would be much greater. And equal rights and educational opportunities for women would greatly improve their characters, making possible genuine sympathetic and intellectual associations of the sexes instead of mere animal pleasure²⁷. Views such as those of Thompson were common among the socialists. They believed that a cooperative society, as well as enlarging the field of choice for a partner, would enable the real character of each member of the

25. New Moral World, Jan. 24, 1835, pp. 97-99 and Jan. 31, 1835, pp. 105-108 (lectures by Robert Owen on marriage).

26. Crisis, May 11, 1833, p. 142 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).

27. Thompson, Inquiry, pp. 554-557.

community to be known. Since affection would be spoken of honestly, there would be no deception or insincerity, and nature would lead to the discovery of those who had the strongest affection for each other²⁸.

It was proposed that, in a cooperative society, union between the sexes would be based on affection only, would continue as long as that affection could be maintained, and would cease only, under well-devised regulations, when affection no longer existed. Men and women would never be compelled to associate contrary to their feelings. However, the socialists contended that, in a cooperative system, affection would become more disinterested and durable so that unions would in fact be more lasting than they were under existing conditions. Also, in such a system there would be no motive for sexual crime or prostitution, which were the result of ignorance, poverty, and disappointment of the affections, and sexual disease would soon be eradicated²⁹. Divorce and permission to re-marry would be granted equally to both parties, thus rectifying the existing partiality of the law which tended to license male adulteries while severely punishing those committed by females. The arrangements of the cooperative communities would ensure that the comforts and property of wife and children and the education of the children could not be affected by the duration of the marriage contract, thus removing what the socialists considered to be the only plausible argument against divorce under existing circumstances³⁰.

28. Crisis, May 11, 1833, pp. 143-144, and May 25, 1833, p. 155 (reports of lectures by Robert Owen). Robert Owen, Revolution in Mind and Practice, pp. 84-85.

29. Crisis, May 11, 1833, pp. 143-144, and May 25, 1833, p. 155 (reports of lectures by Robert Owen). New Moral World, June 22, 1839, pp. 556-558 (article by Margaret Reynolds on "Permanence of marriage unions under the rational system"). Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, VI, 9; Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 84.

30. Crisis, May 11, 1833, pp. 141, 143-144; May 18, 1833, pp. 145-146. Thompson, Inquiry, pp. 556-557.

The most prominent advocate of these unorthodox opinions concerning marriage and sex was Robert Owen himself, but, under Owen's influence, most of the socialists adopted such views. Among them were most of the leading figures in the movement, including William Thompson, Robert Dale Owen, Frances Wright and James Smith³¹. The views of the Saint-Simonians, whose criticisms of the marriage laws bore a close resemblance to those of Robert Owen,³² may have influenced some of the Owenites,³³ and the ideas of another French reformer, Charles Fourier, may have had a similar influence³⁴. But, apart from small groups of Saint-Simonians and Fourierists and some of the utilitarians, there were very few in Britain holding such radical views on marriage and sex as those of the Owenite socialists.

31. For example, Frances Wright, according to Perkins and Wolfson, Frances Wright, pp. 153-154, first adopted her controversial views on these matters as a result of her stay at New Harmony in 1826. She came to accept Owen's views on marriage entirely and even used the same terminology. See New Moral World, June 21, 1845, pp. 425-426; Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 198; Perkins and Wolfson, op cit, pp. 193-194.
32. Richard K.P. Pankhurst, The Saint-Simonians Mill and Carlyle (London, 1957) p. 4.
33. James Smith, for example, saw much of merit in the Saint Simonians' position on marriage and, during the visit of Saint-Simonian missionaries to England in 1833, he was quick to defend them against allegations that they favoured community of women. See Crisis, Dec. 28, 1833, p. 142; Jan. 4, 1834, p. 148.
34. Fourier regarded the family as the greatest obstacle to the freedom of the passions because it concentrated all affections within its own narrow circle and was indifferent to the sufferings of those outside. Like Owen, he believed that couples should not make lifelong commitments to love one another but, unlike Owen, he was not prepared to risk offending public opinion by demanding immediate abolition of marriage and the family. He was, therefore, deliberately vague on the question and he hoped to rely on education of the children in his proposed "phalanx" arrangements to prevent the inculcation of family sentiment. He also wished to preserve the sexual neutrality of children as long as possible and therefore, in contrast to Owen, he opposed any form of sex education. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 68-70.

Section 4. The socialists devised various schemes to implement their proposals for reconstructing marriage arrangements as far as was expedient under existing imperfect conditions. In 1833, it was proposed in the Crisis that persons having mutual affection and wishing to form a union would announce their intention in one of the socialists' Sunday assemblies. If their intention remained three months later, they would make a second public declaration which, registered in the books of their society, would constitute their marriage. If, after twelve months, the couple stated their unhappiness with the union, they were to return home for a further six months after which, if they were still unhappy, they would be given an immediate divorce. Should one party object to the separation, they would be required to live together a further six months, after which final separation would be granted should that still be the wish of one party³⁵. Such proposals, which would now seem cautious, were revolutionary in 1833 and even most of the socialists were hesitant to implement them while still living in the "old immoral world".

A female socialist, writing to the Crisis in 1833 under the name "Concordia", expressed the feelings of many of her comrades on this matter. Whilst she agreed that present marriage arrangements were wrong, "Concordia" felt that society must experience a great revolution in attitudes before public opinion was ready for Robert Owen's proposals. If the experiment were attempted under existing circumstances, it would deprive women and children of protection³⁶. In reply, Robert Owen stressed that he did not intend his views on marriage to be adopted in the present state of society, nor did he wish that any of his followers should individually incur

35. Crisis, May 11, 1833, pp. 143-144; May 18, 1833, pp. 145-146.

36. Crisis, June 22, 1833, pp. 189-190 (letter from "Concordia").

the scorn of the world. It was first necessary to form a union sufficiently numerous and strong to protect each other from the old laws and in which arrangements would be made to ensure prosperity for all and to protect and educate the children³⁷. Similarly, James Smith warned Crisis readers that even the existing irrational system of marriage was necessary for the protection and respectability of women until they were emancipated and made independent of men³⁸.

Although the socialists saw the need to maintain the traditional marriage arrangements under existing circumstances, they often attempted in practice to eliminate some of the worst aspects of those arrangements. For example, when Robert Dale Owen married Mary Jane Robinson of Virginia on April 12, 1832, the couple signed an agreement stating that they contracted a legal marriage solely to avoid perpetual exposure to the annoyances that would otherwise result. They selected a simple ceremony unassisted by a clergyman and made no promises regarding the future state of their affections. In addition, the husband morally divested himself of the rights which the law gave him over the person and property of his wife³⁹. Frances Wright's sister, Camilla, married in conformity with American civil institutions and customs in 1827, so as not to prejudice the public against listening to the reasoning behind the opinions of Frances and herself on the subject of marriage⁴⁰. But her husband, Richeson Whitby, signed away his claim to everything in his wife's possession in return for an

37. Crisis, June 29, 1833, pp. 194-195. See also New Moral World, Dec. 20, 1834, pp. 57-61.

38. Crisis, July 13, 1833, p. 209 (report of lecture by James Smith).

39. Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 58.

40. Perkins and Wolfson, Frances Wright, p. 187.

annuity of \$300.00⁴¹. Frances Wright, however, made no similar effort to secure her property for herself when she married the educational reformer, Phiquepal d'Arusmont, in France in 1832, an omission which she later had cause to regret⁴². The socialist press in England tended to publicise examples of unorthodox marriage practices by socialists or others, including those at the Lawrence Street chapel, a Southcottian foundation in Birmingham, where the custom was for couples to simply marry themselves⁴³. Eileen Yeo notes that after 1840 local socialist branches, which were already registered as places of worship to avoid interruption of Sunday meetings under the Six Acts, also got themselves licensed for the solemnisation of marriages under the new Marriage Act, and marriages were performed in the Sheffield and London A1 branches among others, using the civil ceremony. A considerable amount of ritual could be involved, with a branch organist and choir performing several numbers and, after the branch president had administered the vows, a local lecturer reading a sermon on the socialist recipe for marital bliss, followed by a wedding breakfast. It is not clear whether the divorce procedure was ever used, but Yeo suggests that the constant warnings given by the socialists that this procedure should be reserved for community indicate that it may have been⁴⁴.

The various communities established by the socialists in America

41. Ibid, p. 310.

42. Ibid, p. 313.

43. Yeo, "Radical Culture", p. 101. Accounts of weddings at the Lawrence Street chapel are contained in Crisis, May 24, 1834, pp. 54-55; July 12, 1834, p. 108. The man gave the woman a ring and a written pledge, stamped with the impressions of the united rights of man and woman, declaring that he would be a faithful husband. The woman accepted the ring and gave a similar written pledge to the man.

44. Yeo, "Radical Culture", pp. 101-102.

and Britain provided the greatest scope for experimentation with alternative marriage arrangements. Unorthodox marriages were sometimes practiced at New Harmony, for example, with the couple saying "I AB, do agree to take this man (woman) to be my husband (wife), and declare that I submit to any other ceremony upon this occasion only in conformity with the laws of the state". Women were not compelled to promise to obey their husbands, and the parties were not asked to vow their love until separated by death⁴⁵. Free love was not practiced at New Harmony although, once a couple had given notice of their intention to marry, premarital sex was permitted during the three months that they were required to wait before their legal union. Robert Owen encouraged early marriages in order to safeguard morality, but divorce was relatively easy to obtain by the standards of the time⁴⁶. Raymond Lee Muncy observes that, although radical socialists were usually charged with immorality, strange sexual practices among American communitarians were confined mainly to fanatical religious communities, and there were few cases of free love practices in socialist communities⁴⁷.

Communitarianism was seen by the socialists as a means of extending the family. Each community was to be one large family engaged in cooperative agriculture, industry, trade and education⁴⁸. The welfare facilities of these communities would undermine the nuclear family by making alternative provisions for coping with the "critical life situation" against which

45. George Browning Lockwood, The New Harmony Communities, 2nd ed., (Marion-Indiana, 1902), p. 176. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 57-58.

46. Muncy, op cit, pp. 57-59.

47. Ibid, p. 213.

48. Robert Owen, Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 73; Book of New Moral World, VI, 48. According to John Humphrey Noyes, History of American Socialisms (1870. Reprinted, New York, 1961), p. 23, the main idea of both Owenism and Fourierism was "...the enlargement of the home, the extension of the family union beyond the little man-and-wife circle to large corporations".

the family and kinship system provided the only insurance under existing circumstances. Loss of a close relative would no longer be so catastrophic, since there would be a wide circle of loved ones to turn to for comfort, and there would be no economic hardship for orphans, widows, or for the sick. Mutual assistance and kindness would ensure the welfare of each individual, thus eliminating the hardship and anxiety that resulted from individualism⁴⁹. It was intended that communal cooking arrangements would replace those of individual families, giving the advantages of economy in bulk-buying, labour-saving by cooking for larger numbers, and a better environment and better company at the dining table⁵⁰. Cooperative housekeeping and the introduction of mechanisation to the greatest extent possible in domestic arrangements were intended, in conjunction with cooperative cooking, to relieve women from the enormous domestic drudgery involved in the home, which was a major influence against equality of the sexes⁵¹. Communal arrangements for the upbringing of children were also intended to play a major part in the emancipation of female communarians, as well as removing the crucial task of education from the family and placing it in the hands of the community.

On the whole, little progress was, in practice, made toward destroying the individual family system at any of the Owenite communities. Muncy claims that, despite the use of every conceivable means to neutralize the influence of the private family, Robert Owen's theories found only limited

49. The Times, May 29, 1817, and Aug. 9, 1817 (letters from Robert Owen); Aug. 22, 1817 (report of address by Robert Owen at the City of London tavern). Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", p. 21.

50. The Times, Aug. 9, 1817 (letter from Robert Owen). Robert Owen, "Report to County of Lanark", pp. 23-24, 30.

51. Joseph Clayton, Robert Owen: Social Pioneer (London, 1908), p. 51.

practical expression at New Harmony and familism won out over socialism, as Owen himself admitted in his farewell address of April 13, 1827⁵². Similarly, R.G. Garnett concludes that little practical progress was made toward disrupting the individual family system in the British socialist communities, including those at Orbiston, Ralahine, and Queenwood. Although communal arrangements were usually made for educating the children and infant dormitories were often provided, most communities did not survive long enough to exert any great educational influence on the children⁵³. And J.F.C. Harrison writes that the various provisions for freeing women from domestic drudgery, which were a part of most socialist communities, were not usually welcomed by the women in the communities⁵⁴. It would appear that they were not yet ready to be emancipated and that, in general, the prevailing sentiment in favour of the family was too strong to be broken down even in a cooperative community⁵⁵.

According to Muncy, the family, which threatened the interest of the community by placing its own interests first, was the institution that caused the most concern among communitarians generally⁵⁶. Their concern appears to have been well founded, for Muncy shows that those American communities of the nineteenth century that in practice abolished

52. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 61-62.

53. R.G. Garnett, Cooperation and the Owenite Socialist Communities in Britain 1825-1845 (Manchester, 1972), p. 230.

54. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, p. 187.

55. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that American Fourierist communities made as little progress toward breaking down family arrangements as did the Owenite communities. See Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 72-78.

56. Ibid, p. 10.

private property and nuclear families, such as the Shakers, Harmonists, Ephrataites, Zoarites, and Perfectionists, survived longer than those that retained them. The Owenite and Fourierist communities, which permitted a limited holding of private property and allowed the monogamous family to remain intact were, as a result of their individualism, subject to internal dissension which brought about their ultimate collapse⁵⁷.

The socialists did not, therefore, achieve any lasting practical success in reforming the institutions of marriage and the family, although their pioneering experiments did at least provide a practical illustration of the possibilities that existed for social change in this area. Their importance lay in developing and openly expounding a thorough critique of traditional mores concerning marriage, sex and the family, along with concrete principles upon which to construct new arrangements, and in initiating a franker discussion of these issues than had previously been attempted. As a result they brought many new ideas to the public attention which, although not gaining immediate general acceptance, did remain to influence later discussion of these subjects and to ultimately make an important indirect contribution to social change.

57. Ibid, pp. 230-231.

Chapter Three

SOCIALISM AND FEMINISM

Section 1. Closely connected with the Owenite socialist's opinions on marriage and the family was their espousal of feminism, the doctrine that embraces the economic, social, political, mental and sexual equality of women with men. In both Britain and America, the socialists were among the earliest and most radical exponents of feminism, and in this, they were again led by a combination of theoretical and empirical considerations to act contrary to prevailing intellectual and social trends. The following analysis deals primarily with the situation of women in Britain in the early nineteenth century, but it should be noted that American women at that time suffered similar disadvantages.

The effects of the industrial revolution on the position of women prior to 1850 were complex. The prosperity of middle-class families, enabling the employment of an increasing number of domestic servants, and the transferral to the factory of many household occupations, such as baking, brewing, and clothes-making, liberated many middle-class women from much of the drudgery of housekeeping. As a result, the concept of the middle-class woman's role in society changed from the active one of "perfect wife" to the passive one of "perfect lady". However, this merely increased women's dependence upon males, whether fathers, relatives, or husbands, made their lives all the more trivial, and relegated them to the position of status object¹. On the other hand a growing number of unmarried middle-class women, resulting from an

1. J.A. and Olive Banks, Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England (New York, 1964) pp. 11-12. McGregor, Divorce in England, pp. 65-67.

increasing numerical disparity of the sexes during the first half of the nineteenth century, were forced to seek employment outside the family. Since the professions and trade were closed to them by custom and by their lack of education, while they were unable to lower themselves to factory, shop, or domestic work, the main "respectable" employment available was the overcrowded occupation of governess².

Working-class women who remained at home were made more financially dependent upon their husbands by the replacement of home industries, in which they had contributed their share to the family income, by the factory system. But domestic conditions tended to improve once industry moved away from the home, and it began to be assumed that men's wages should be paid on a family basis rather than at the level of individual subsistence and that married women made an adequate contribution to the economy in home-making and child-rearing. Women who went to work in the factories were exploited and exposed to such evils as low wages, long hours, poor working conditions, physical and mental deterioration, and separation from home and family. They were, however, able to become more self-reliant. Single women, in particular, gained in social and economic independence and some left home to become their own mistresses. The factory also provided an opportunity for women to communicate with one another and slowly they learned the advantages of organization and cooperation for common ends, as in the formation of sick societies and benefit clubs. But these changes took place very slowly and little progress was made by working-class women before 1850³.

2. W. Lyon Blease, The Emancipation of English Women (London, 1910) pp. 94-95.

3. Pinchbeck, Women Workers, pp. 1-5, 306-316. Blease, Emancipation of English Women, pp. 92-93. For more details on working women in the period 1832-1850, see Wanda Fraiken Neff, Victorian Working Women (New York, 1929).

Women of all classes suffered great legal disadvantages. O.R. McGregor observes that "Outside the family married women had the same legal status as children and lunatics; within it they were their husband's inferiors"⁴. Married women had practically no right to hold property, to sue in the courts except in the husband's name, to sign legal papers, to custody of their legitimate children above the age of seven, or to political privileges except as sovereign or, if ratepayers, as voters for the Boards of Poor Law Guardians. Moreover, the marriage service clearly spelled out women's lowly station, submission, and duties⁵. With a few minor exceptions, little progress was made toward rectifying this legal situation prior to 1850⁶.

Women's inequality was also sexual in that they were expected to be the passive, submissive instruments of male gratification. It was assumed that their only legitimate satisfactions from sexual intercourse were those of motherhood⁷. Middle-class women, in particular, were the victims of a double standard of morality which involved the imposition of a far stricter code of sexual behaviour upon them than upon men of the same class. It was even thought that the mere knowledge of sexual immorality was harmful to women, and sexual topics were excluded from drawing-room conversations⁸. The subjection of women was further sanctioned by the evangelical revival which reinstated the Pauline conception

4. McGregor, Divorce in England, p. 67.

5. Ibid, p. 67. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 65-67. Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle (Cambridge - Mass., 1968), pp. 62-64.

6. Blease, Emancipation of English Women, pp. 110-111. Perkin, Origins of Modern English Society, p. 160. Augusta G. Violette, Economic Feminism in American Literature Prior to 1848 (Orone - Maine, 1925), pp. 54-56, 99-100.

7. McGregor, Divorce in England, p. 68.

8. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, pp. 107-108.

of marriage and reinforced the sexual degradation of women⁹. Finally, their lack of any useful education completed women's subjection, and, in this matter also, little progress was made prior to 1850.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was little serious questioning of women's inferior position. Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women,¹⁰ which forcefully summarized many previous arguments on the topic, had an important long-term influence on the women's movement, but its immediate effect, upon publication in 1792, was not great¹¹. William O'Neill comments that "Although widely read, or, at least, commented upon, it met with universal disapprobation"¹². During the following half-century attitudes slowly began to change and a major factor in this was the rise of organized, militant secularism. Since the subjugation of women was sanctioned by dogmatic religion, the growth of secularism aided their emancipation, and, significantly, the early advocates of equality of the sexes - Wollstonecraft, the Godwinites, Bentham, the utilitarians, and the socialists - were all freethinkers¹³. Romanticism may also have contributed to this change of attitude by encouraging greater honesty and sincerity in sexual matters and by treating all of women's faculties as deserving equal cultivation, as a result of which their intellectual emancipation was promoted¹⁴. A further factor may have

9. McGregor, Divorce in England, p. 74.

10. Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792. Reprinted, New York, 1974).

11. Violette, Economic Feminism, p. 22. Blease, Emancipation of English Women, pp. 83, 85-87.

12. William L. O'Neill (ed.), The Woman Movement (Chicago, 1969), p. 15.

13. Blease, Emancipation of English Women, pp. 87-90.

14. Ibid, pp. 90-91.

been the release of middle-class women from the burdens of domesticity, along with a revolt against the humiliation and triviality of what took its place¹⁵. And O'Neill adopts the argument, suggested by Philippe Aries, that the growth of feminist feelings was a response to a recent worsening of their position in society. According to this interpretation, the early nineteenth century saw the culmination of a growing emphasis upon the bourgeois conception of the family. The transition from the larger and looser medieval family to the bourgeois family meant that domestic life became increasingly more demanding and confining for women, the alternatives to it diminished, and the legal and political status of women declined. The fact that it coincided with the rise of liberal ideas and the demand for suffrage made this growing inequality more obvious and indefensible¹⁶. But, whatever the causes of this change of attitude, it found outward expression in the growth of a new spirit among some women. This was indicated by the entrance of a few women into new spheres of activity, the efforts of some women to assert their own opinions, the pursuit of literary careers by a few women, and the intrusion of others into political organizations such as the Anti-Corn Law League and, in America, the anti-slavery movement, from which many of the early American feminists emerged¹⁷. It also found expression in the emergence of a nascent feminist movement.

The rise of organized feminism in the first half of the nineteenth century was most notable in America where social conditions, including the influence of the frontier, the tendency toward association, and the general

15. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, p. 12.

16. O'Neill, The Woman Movement, pp. 15-17.

17. Blease, Emancipation of English Women, pp. 93, 96-103. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 41, 44-47, 68-70. Violette, Economic Feminism, pp. 61-77.

ferment of reform in religion, politics, philanthropy, and education, were more favourable to the movement than they were in Britain. But, even in America, the feminist movement of the 1830s and 1840s was feeble and its actual achievements before 1850 were slight. English feminism made even less progress during this period¹⁸. J.A. and Olive Banks claim that there was no true debate on the subject of rights of women at this time and that it was not until the middle years of the century that the sporadic and isolated attempts of individual reformers showed evidence of becoming an organized women's rights movement. Until that time, they conclude, feminism was not a recognizable social phenomenon¹⁹. When the English feminist movement finally got underway, its program was much more conservative, narrow, and "respectable" than was that of the American feminists. Its primary concerns were the need to open up new lines of employment for unmarried middle-class women, the problem of property division between husband and wife when middle-class marriages broke down, and the campaign to procure the vote and to win recognition for the place of women in public life²⁰. In general, it was not concerned with the position of wife and mother in a stable family. Constance Rover claims that the women's emancipation movement in England, which she dates from the 1850s onwards "...was dominated by that sense of propriety and respectability which was the hallmark of the middle-classes during that period - so much so that some male opposition to the women's vote

18. O'Neill, The Woman Movement, pp. 17-21.

19. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, pp. 23, 27.

20. Ibid, pp. 27, 38-40.

was based on the fear that women would impose strict moral standards upon society"²¹. There was, moreover, a strong tendency in the movement to believe that women were usually the passive victims of men's sexual desires, which they regarded as, not a natural biological drive, but an unhappy indication of the "beast in human nature"²².

According to the traditional interpretation, therefore, feminist ideas began to emerge in the early nineteenth century in Britain and America but, prior to 1850 and particularly in Britain, feminism was virtually non-existent in any conscious or organized form. However, this interpretation gives insufficient weight to the ideas, writings, and social experiments of the Owenite socialists. Long before the limited campaigns of the late nineteenth-century British feminists got underway, the socialists had developed a broad, radical, and coherent feminist philosophy and had, by their zeal in propagating this philosophy, injected many new ideas into the arena of public discussion on this question. Moreover, they were the first conscious and organized feminist movement in Britain and were promoters of original projects aimed at the practical achievement of equality between the sexes.

Section 2. Following from their views on the formation of character, the socialists believed that women's inequality was founded upon upbringing and education. Indeed, they asserted that women were even more moulded by external circumstances than were men. Under existing arrangements, women were treated as the individual property of men, whose playthings they were brought up to be. They were trained to develop their imagination, memory,

21. Constance Rover, Love, Morals, and the Feminists (London, 1970), p. 1.

22. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, p. 111.

and vanity at the expense of their reason, and to repress such true feelings and affections as were considered unfeminine by conventional standards. They were also allowed no independence of taste, opinion, or action, and were denied healthy physical exercise, being instead expected to distort their figures to suit fashion. Higher-class women were encouraged to become vain and weak, sacrificing health and cheerfulness in an attempt to appear feeble and delicate, and wasting their time attempting to improve their natural beauty and grace rather than learning the duties of wives, mothers and rational companions of men. Lower-class females imitated these activities as far as they could afford. As a result of such training, women became unworthy companions of men and incapable of fulfilling their great social duties. Moreover, the concept of women's inferiority, instilled in the minds of both sexes during their upbringing, was sustained during adult life by women's legal, political, social, economic, and sexual subjection, all of which were sanctioned by the Christian religion which decreed men's superiority and women's duty to submit. In attacking these inequalities, the socialists were particularly keen to attack the double standard of morality mentioned previously, claiming that a woman's sexual transgressions were the fault of society, which exposed them to temptations whilst often bringing them up to be too weak to resist. The socialists also observed that, due to their inferior position, the chief hope of well-being for lower and middle-class women alike lay in acquiring as wealthy a husband as possible, and, since such marriages were not based upon love, infidelity was the likely result²³.

23. Crisis, May 25, 1833, pp. 159-160 (article by "Concordia" on "Women"); July 13, 1833, pp. 212-213 (article by B. Warden on "The women of the future"); Aug. 24, 1833, p. 269 (article by "Zero"); April 12, 1834, p. 8 (article by "Vesta"); May 3, 1834, pp. 31-32 (article by "Concordia"). New Moral World, March 4, 1837, pp. 151-152 (article by "Kate" on "Women"); Jan. 12, 1839, pp. 172-173 (article by "W.W.P." on "Women as she is and as she ought to be"); Jan. 26, 1839, pp. 210-211 (article by "W.W.P.").

To achieve equality of the sexes, the socialists believed it was necessary to totally transform the education and upbringing of both males, who must renounce their arrogant assumption of divine superiority, and females²⁴. They asserted that men could never be happy, or cease to oppress their fellows, as long as they continued to oppress women. By allowing them the privilege of oppressing women, the ruling class had appeased the male half of the oppressed class. To deliver man from slavery, his own taste for oppression had to be destroyed, and his education had to begin with the principle of equal rights for the whole species²⁵. Furthermore, the socialists saw the question of woman's emancipation as inseparable from the struggle against private property, the state, and organized religion. They believed that the unjust distribution of and competition for wealth was the major obstacle to the freedom of both men and women and that the happiness of both sexes would be found in community. Only limited improvements in women's situation were possible from mere reform of existing laws and customs²⁶.

24. The determination of the best mode of female education therefore became a matter of great concern to the socialists. See for example New Moral World, June 8, 1838, pp. 514-516 (letter from W.H. Brontusion on "Education and capabilities of women"); June 22, 1839, p. 549 (letter from "Anna" on "Education of women"); July 20, 1839, pp. 639-640 (letter from "A Lover of Truth" on "Education and capabilities of women").
25. Crisis, July 13, 1833, pp. 212-213 (article by B. Warden on "The women of the future"); Aug. 24, 1833, p. 269 (article by "Zero"); April 5, 1834, p. 258 (article by "Philia"). New Moral World, March 4, 1837, pp. 151-152 (article by "Kate" on "Women"); Jan. 12, 1839, pp. 172-173 (article by "W.W.P" on "Woman as she is and as she ought to be"); Sept. - Oct., 1843 (series of articles by "M.A.S." on the necessity of cooperation of both sexes for human advancement).
26. New Moral World, Jan. 26, 1839, pp. 210-211 (article by "W.W.P."); March 30, 1839, p. 360; April 6, 1839, pp. 372-373 (article by "Kate" on the "Condition of women"). Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 68, 91.

There was general agreement among the socialists that the emancipation of women should be a priority for the movement and an integral part of a cooperative society. In a socialist society, men and women would be equal in education, rights, privileges, and personal liberty. Women would be brought up to be as useful as men, particularly since scientific and technological progress had, in practice, largely equalized the physical powers of the two sexes. And, since improvements in education and upbringing would elevate the characters of both sexes to an unprecedented degree, they would become enlightened and delightful companions to each other²⁷. Moreover, these steps to emancipate women, along with new arrangements for marriage in a socialist society, would so greatly improve relations between the sexes that love would become a perpetual courtship rather than a domestic prison. To facilitate this goal, each sex would be trained to respect and treat as equal the members of the opposite sex²⁸.

Section 3. Male and female socialists seem to have been equally fervent advocates of feminism. However, there was a widespread feeling in the movement that women should take the lead in the fight for emancipation and that they should determine their own destiny²⁹. In part, this feeling arose from an awareness that there were certain differences in the characters of men and women which prevented males from fully understanding the problems and needs of females. The socialists diverged from one another in their attempts to define these differences, but they were generally agreed that the differences

27. Crisis, July 13, 1833, pp. 212-213 (article by B. Warden on "The women of the future"). New Moral World, March 4, 1837, pp. 151-152 (article by "Kate" on "Women"); Jan. 26, 1839, pp. 210-211 (article by "W.W.P."). Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, VI, 37.

28. Crisis, May 4, 1833, p. 130. New Moral World, Jan. 26, 1839, pp. 210-211 (article by "W.W.P").

29. For example, see Crisis, Aug. 24, 1833, p. 269 (editorial).

were significant³⁰. However, there was disagreement as to how much these differences were the accidental products of environment and upbringing, and how much they represented inherent differences in the nature of the sexes which ought to be allowed for in the task of devising legislation for women. The socialists conducted a sincere and undogmatic discussion of this question, which was reflected in various contributions from both men and women to the Crisis and its successor, the New Moral World. That there were such differences is not surprising considering the novelty of the socialist's views. Nevertheless, it is instructive to devote some attention to this debate, since it illustrates the socialist's open-minded treatment of new ideas and newly perceived problems, and reveals something of the earnest and inquisitive spirit that pervaded the movement.

The feelings of many female socialists were expressed in a letter to Robert Owen from "Concordia" in the Crisis of August 10, 1833. "Concordia" claimed that, since the sexes could not fully understand each other's feelings and actions, it was impossible for one to legislate wisely for the other. This would remain true even though socialism would lead to both a closer approximation in the character of the sexes (with women acquiring greater intellectual and reasoning powers and men acquiring greater kindness, sympathy, and selflessness), and a greater comprehension developing in each sex for the other as a result of the practice of sincerity and openness. "Concordia" believed that there were certain natural

30. To take one example: Robert Dale Owen wrote, in Crisis, Feb. 9, 1833, p. 37, that women were less mercenary than men because they were seldom engaged in trade; less spoilt by conventional education and pseudo - intellectualism; less ruled by habit and prejudice and more by nature and impulse; and superior in dress and manners. On the other hand, he believed that the dependence of their situation made them indecisive, lacking in self-confidence, and unstable, and gave them an unbalanced sense of the relative importance of things and a rather undeveloped intellect.

moral and intellectual differences which no social arrangement could remove, an example being the greater intensity of women's feeling. She concluded that women should take their affairs into their own hands and that, as a preliminary step, each should try to understand herself and her own feelings³¹. These views were received sympathetically by a majority of the socialists including Robert Owen, although Owen feared that women had not yet sufficient general knowledge and moral courage to legislate for themselves with full advantage³².

There were, however, some socialists who disagreed with "Concordia". "Vlasta", writing in the Crisis of August 31, 1833, argued that the wants of all human beings were similar, present differences being mainly the product of different circumstances; that mankind had a common nature; and that the greatest happiness principle was all-sufficient as the basis for legislation. Although men were entirely ignorant of women's nature under present circumstances, women were equally strangers to the feelings of their sex in general because, being devoted to the service of men, they had never been permitted fellowship or sympathy with other women. The intensity of woman's love, which "Concordia" considered a mark of excellence, was to "Vlasta" a symbol of woman's moral and social degradation, this being reflected in her humiliating love for man regardless of his individual worth and her slavery to him whilst being indifferent to the weal of her own sex. Estimable qualities in men had rarely awakened the love of women because women's education had prevented them from understanding vice and virtue. "Vlasta" believed that, if love were directed only toward worthy objects, men and women could be

31. Crisis, Aug. 10, 1833, pp. 254-255 (letter to Robert Owen from "Concordia").

32. Crisis, Aug. 24, 1833, p. 268 (editorial).

transformed by each other's aid and by more rational institutions to be worthy of love. But she warned that, if women legislated independently for themselves, they would have no defence against the counter legislation of men in favour of their lowest instincts. The best security for happiness was the mutual cooperation of both parties, who should have equal weight in forming social arrangements³³.

"Concordia"'s letter had considerable impact in socialist and feminist circles, and it even travelled to France, where it was printed in the Tribune des Femmes. In this journal, "Suzanne" commented that "Concordia"'s advice to Owen could equally be applied to Fourier, and she added that women should refuse men the right of directing women's destinies³⁴.

Meanwhile the Saint-Simonian missionaries then in London had apparently objected that Owen had not given sufficient attention to the emancipation of women. "Justitia" replied to this in the Crisis of March 22, 1834.

She defined the slavery of women as consisting in their subjection to severe laws, enacted by an all-male legislature, and in their systematic exclusion from an education. Their emancipation, therefore, must involve equal education and equal participation in legislation, both of which had been provided for in the constitution proposed by Robert Owen.

"Justitia" agreed that men did not comprehend women and she also argued that affections in women were stronger, more equable, and more lasting than in men. She believed it was impossible to determine how far these differences might be modified by changed circumstances. But she felt

33. Crisis, Aug. 31, 1833, pp. 279-280 (letter from "Vlasta").

34. Crisis, March 8, 1834, p. 232 (extract from the Tribune des Femmes by "Suzanne").

that woman could do no better than to take her place in the assemblies in which her own nature and that of man was to be regulated³⁵.

The discussion was continued in the Crisis of April 5, 1834, with a letter from "Philia", who took issue with both "Concordia" and "Justitia". "Philia" went along with the majority of socialists of both sexes who lauded "Concordia"'s opinions "for their just discrimination in female character". But she felt that a perfect knowledge of female character as it had been made by existing institutions was not worth the attention of a "wise and just legislator" like Robert Owen, who had formed a constitution asserting the equal rights of both sexes. Against "Justitia", she contended that "the organ of adhesiveness" was nearly equal in the sexes, though present circumstances forced it to take different directions. Men adhered to power, wealth, and self-interest, whilst women adhered to slavish prejudices and misdirected affections. "Philia" agreed with "Justitia", however, that women would find their happiness in participating equally with men in the assemblies in which their own and men's nature would be formed³⁶.

Debate on this issue continued within the socialist movement throughout the 1830s and early 1840s, although the arguments that were presented developed no further than those enunciated in the Crisis during 1833-1834³⁷. Although no firm conclusions were derived from this debate, it illustrates the type of genuine discussion that took place within the socialist movement and provides an insight into the sense of education going forward that must have prevailed among the membership.

35. Crisis, March 22, 1834, p. 246 (letter from "Justitia").

36. Crisis, April 5, 1834, p. 258 (letter from "Philia").

37. For example see New Moral World, June 8, 1839, p. 516 (letter from "Eliza" on "Comparison of the sexes").

On the other hand, the socialists were in general agreement on the importance that they attached to women as an instrument of moral reform. They shared a common belief of their time that women could exert a civilizing and moralizing influence on society³⁸. Men, they claimed, were less liable to be selfish, debauched, or inclined to bargain or gamble, where women were able to mix freely in the world. And, as an example, they cited French society as being more virtuous, civilized and polite than was English society, as a result of women being allowed to mix more freely in all the occupations and amusements of men³⁹. The socialists believed that women were an enormous potential force for good or ill, particularly since technology had replaced the dominion of physical strength by that of the mind, and women's minds were equal, and in some ways superior to men's. In particular, women were better qualified morally and intellectually as moulders of infant character, in which, as mothers, they naturally played the major part. As mothers, sisters, and wives, women exerted a great influence upon men, diffusing gentleness, benevolence, good manners, and social order. That their influence in existing society apparently had little effect was due to the fact that they were denied the extent of influence which nature intended and also to the circumstances of their education. Also, the mother's example of kindness and integrity was frequently negated by the father, who discouraged benevolence in his sons and fostered willfulness. However, the socialists argued that it was entirely in men's interest that women should become intelligent and moral, for any weaknesses that they promoted in women

38. Christopher Kent, "The Whittington Club: A Bohemian Experiment in Middle-class Social Reform", Victorian Studies, Sept. 1974, p. 48.

39. Crisis, Feb. 9, 1833, p. 37 (article by Robert Dale Owen); March 8, 1834, p. 232.

were passed on to their children. Society as a whole would improve in proportion as women were best educated, most free, and most respected and its regeneration was not possible until women occupied their rightful place⁴⁰.

The idea that women had a special role in the emancipation of mankind was debated enthusiastically within the socialist movement and was also disseminated to the general public through the campaigns of the more prominent socialists in Britain and America, such as Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, Frances Wright, James Smith, William Thompson, and Anna Wheeler, who was one of the most important female socialists in Britain⁴¹. Similar views to those of the Owenites on this, and on other matters relating to women, were expressed by the Saint-Simonians and Fourierists, and Fourier was, in fact, credited with having coined the term "feminism"⁴². Neither group was of great significance in Britain,

40. Crisis, May 25, 1833, pp. 159-160 (article by "Concordia" on "Women"); July 13, 1833, pp. 212-213 (article by B. Warden on "The women of the future"); Feb. 15, 1834, p. 204 (article by "Concordia" on "The influence of women"); May 3, 1834, pp. 31-32 (article by "Concordia"); June 27, 1834 (article by "Concordia" on "The fancied freedom of women"). New Moral World, June 13, 1835, pp. 263-264 (article "Kate" on "Female improvement"); Jan. 12, 1839, pp. 172-173 (article by "W.W.P." on "Woman as she is and as she ought to be"). Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 94.

41. Richard K.P. Pankhurst, "Anna Wheeler: A Pioneer Socialist and Feminist", Political Quarterly, April - June, 1954, pp. 137-139. Flexner, Century of Struggle, p. 27. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 93-94.

42. For Saint-Simonian views on women see Crisis, June 15, 1833, p. 182 (article by Jeanne Victoine, taken from The Women of the Future, a weekly journal edited by women in Paris, and translated by Anna Wheeler). In commenting upon this article, the Crisis noted the similarity between Saint-Simonian and Owenite principles. For Fourierist views see the New Moral World, Nov. 19, 1836, p. 31 (extract from the Fourierist journal, the Phalange, of August, 1836). See also Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 93; Pankhurst, The Saint-Simonians, pp. 107-112; and Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 220.

although the American Fourierist movement was quite significant. Their ideas were, however, examined with interest by the Owenites and therefore probably percolated into the British movement.

Section 4. As well as making a major theoretical contribution to the feminist movement, the socialists helped to advance women's emancipation in a number of more practical ways. In the first place, they made a vigorous attempt to bring the question of women to the public attention. Frances Wright was particularly active in this endeavour, and she was perhaps the leading feminist of her day. In setting an example as the co-editor of a journal devoted to reform, she helped to open up a field of activity previously closed to women. The Free Enquirer aimed "to open the eyes of the gentler sex to the nature of their situation in society, and to excite their attention to the discovery of some remedy for the unjust disabilities to which law and custom subjected them"⁴³. Wright was also active as a public lecturer in the United States during 1820-1830 and 1836, although, in defying the widespread prejudice against women speaking in public, she thereby excited the hostility of church and press. As a result of her lecturing activities, "Fanny Wright societies" were formed, which later merged into the Woman Suffrage Association and which were, according to Augusta Violette, the starting point of the reform movement that led to the passage of the Married Women's Property Act in Albany, New York, in 1848⁴⁴. Wright linked the issue of women's rights with her support of individual liberty and equality, free education

43. Bertha-Monica Stearns, "Reform Periodicals and Female Reformers, 1830-1860", American Historical Review, July 1932, p. 679.

44. Violette, Economic Feminism, pp. 52-53.

for all, working-class political action, free inquiry, and rationality in opposition to religious obscurantism. Her views influenced many women and also many working men, who attended her lectures or read accounts of her addresses in the labour press⁴⁵. She also made emancipation of women a feature of her experimental commune at Nashoba, in Tennessee, which was a project aimed primarily at the emancipation of southern slaves. Being above all an advocate of personal independence, she inserted a provision in the bye-laws of the community stating that the admission of a husband or wife did not automatically admit the spouse. Each was to be voted on individually⁴⁶. Although Wright devoted most of her attention to the United States, she occasionally lectured to the British Socialists, among whom she was highly respected, and her lectures were warmly welcomed⁴⁷.

Wright's collaborator in the United States, Robert Dale Owen, was also a dedicated feminist. Even after he had lost the radicalism of his youth, the influence of his father's ideas was still evident in the younger Owen's practical efforts in support of women's rights. He played an important part in reforming the Indiana Statutes so as to give women in the state legal rights much in advance of those provided in other states, and he was also prominent in his defense of Indiana's relatively liberal divorce legislation⁴⁸. As a result of his work in the 1850 Indiana Constitutional Convention, a provision was inserted in the statutes that

45. Ibid, p. 52. Flexner, Century of Struggle, pp. 27-28.

46. Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 199.

47. Crisis, June 21, 1834, pp. 85-86 (report of a lecture in London by Frances [Wright] D'Arusmont, on the subject of education).

48. Lockwood, New Harmony Communities, p. 177. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 219-220. Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York, 1869), pp. 571-618 ("Marriage and divorce", a discussion between Horace Greeley and Robert Dale Owen).

women thereafter married in the state had the right to acquire and possess property for their own use. This provision became a model that other states emulated. Raymond Lee Muncy writes that the women of Indiana, to express their appreciation of Robert Dale Owen's work, presented him with an engraved silver pitcher and commissioned a bust of him, which still stands in the entrance hall of the state capital building in Indianapolis⁴⁹.

William Thompson also made an important practical contribution to women's emancipation. His Appeal of One Half the Human Race⁵⁰, published in 1825, was the most significant feminist work of the first half of the nineteenth century. It was the first work to deal directly with women's suffrage, and it covered both the theoretical and practical aspects of the question⁵¹. Thompson thoroughly analysed women's social and legal disabilities and defended female suffrage on the grounds that any claim for the vote based on human rights must automatically include women. He also believed that legal and political equality was the only guarantee for women's civil and domestic rights⁵². As Richard Pankhurst notes, this book was a landmark in the feminist movement, exerting a great influence upon many women and particularly the significant group of women involved in the socialist and cooperative movement⁵³.

49. Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 220.

50. William Thompson, Appeal of One-Half the Human Race, (1825. Reprinted, New York, 1970).

51. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 1, 94.

52. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, pp. 17-18.

53. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 95-96.

Thompson's Appeal was a product of his collaboration with Anna Wheeler, and many of the views in the book were, in fact, hers⁵⁴. Wheeler played an important part in cooperative, feminist, and Saint-Simonian circles in London during the 1820s, frequently contributed to socialist and cooperative journals, and was notable as a public lecturer. According to Pankhurst, she was in close contact with Robert Owen, who invariably sent her copies of his published writings whilst she, having contact with French Saint-Simonians and Fourierists, including Charles Fourier himself, advised Owen of developments in French progressive movements⁵⁵. She also sent information to the Owenite press regarding the French movements. Although she was interested in various social systems, she had no doubt that Robert Owen's was the "best basis on which to create a new social edifice"⁵⁶. As a result of her friendship with so many advanced thinkers and of her own activities in the cooperative movement, her influence was extensive. Pankhurst concludes that her feminist views were both broad and explicit and that she offered practical proposals where Wollstonecraft had but hinted⁵⁷.

The efforts of Thompson, Wheeler, Wright, Robert Dale Owen, and many of their less well-known comrades helped foster public interest in the issue of women's emancipation. At the same time, the socialists furthered the cause even more directly by encouraging women to participate equally with men in all the affairs of the movement, thereby giving the women an opportunity to engage in activities that were closed to them in ordinary

54. Thompson, Appeal of One-Half the Human Race, pp. V-XIV (introductory letter to Mrs. Wheeler).

55. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 73-75.

56. Crisis, April 15, 1834, p. 258.

57. Pankhurst, "Anna Wheeler", p. 143.

society. It was considered essential to the success of the socialist program that women be encouraged to take part in the life of the branches. The socialists believed a proper organization of domestic arrangements to be essential for their proposed communities, and women would naturally play a major part in this. Participation in branch activity was an important transitional arrangement, aimed at preparing future communitarians for this new state of existence. For females, who suffered even more than males did from lack of education under existing arrangements and whose moral influence over the character and domestic happiness of man was so important to the success of the communities, it was particularly desirable that they be well instructed in socialist principles previous to them entering community. Every effort was therefore made to induce women to attend socialist meetings⁵⁸. Evidence concerning the socialist's success in achieving this goal is rather inconclusive, however. Frequently, socialist and cooperative meetings in both Britain and the United States were reported to have been "well attended by both sexes". For example, over half those in attendance at the weekly socialist meetings held at New Harmony in the early 1830s were females⁵⁹. Prominent among these were Robert Dale Owen's wife, Mary, and his sister, Jane⁶⁰. But the socialists were not always satisfied with their success in encouraging female attendance. For example, a correspondent to the New Moral World of November 3, 1838, complained of a great dearth of females in the socialist branches. He attributed this to women's dislike or fear of the

58. New Moral World, Nov. 3, 1838, p. 23 (letter from "Kate's Brother" on "Female influence and training").

59. Crisis, July 19, 1834, pp. 115-116 (communication from Robert Dale Owen at New Harmony).

60. Leopold, Robert Dale Owen, pp. 123-141.

socialist principles concerning marriage, and particularly to their having been led by anti-socialist propaganda to believe that these principles were intended for immediate application rather than for application only after men had been educated rationally and surrounded by more favourable circumstances⁶¹.

The socialist movement gave women a rare opportunity to express themselves in public, in both speech and writing, and females were allowed an equal voice with males in the affairs of the movement. In addition to Wright and Wheeler, a number of lesser-known female socialists were encouraged to give public lectures. One example was Frances Morrison, widow of the socialist trade unionist, James Morrison. During 1838-1839 she was active as a lecturer in Owenite institutions in Manchester and the North⁶².

The socialist press devoted considerable space to discussion of issues relating to women, this being almost the only outlet for discussion of women's emancipation in Britain at that time. Speeches of female lecturers were reported,⁶³ and there appeared many letters and articles by women on a great variety of subjects. "Concordia", for example, was a regular contributor to the Crisis on various topics and particularly that of women, while "Kate" contributed a number of articles, some of them on women, to the New Moral World⁶⁴. And "Syrtes" wrote a number of articles for the New Moral World in 1845, on the subject of women. Her arguments were largely reiterations of those presented in the Crisis during 1833-1834, as were

61. New Moral World, Nov. 3, 1838, p. 23 (letter from "Kate's Brother" on "Female influence and training").

62. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, p. 209.

63. For example the Crisis, June 16, 1832, p. 44 and July 7, 1832, p. 66, printed the text of a lecture by Miss Macauley on "Religious responsibility".

64. "Kate" was apparently a pseudonym used by the wife of John Goodwyn Barmby, who claimed to have been the first person to call himself a communist in England. See Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, p. 175n.

the arguments of most other contributors to the New Moral World on this topic. Where female socialists wrote on matters other than that of women, their views were not notably different from those of the male socialists.

The socialists also encouraged women to organize themselves for economic ends in the same way as the males. In 1833, a number of female socialists, having witnessed the benefits derived by many females from the equitable labour exchange system, resolved to form an Association of Ladies, which aimed to extend the advantages of the system to all females who wished to partake of them. The main difficulty in implementing such a scheme lay in obtaining for those whose only capital was their labour power, the materials necessary for useful employment. It was proposed, therefore, that funds be raised by a subscription, with which to purchase materials necessary for making clothes, and that these materials be distributed to Association members in need of employment. Their finished products would then find a market in the equitable exchanges. Women were to conduct the whole business of the Association, but subscriptions or donations would be welcomed from men⁶⁵.

Later the same year a "plan of a practical union of the women of Great Britain and Ireland for the purpose of enabling them to obtain a superior physical, moral and intellectual character", was proposed. The aim was to effect a combination of women of all classes in a system of mutual aid and kindness, by means of which they could surround themselves with circumstances allowing the full development of their characters, physically, morally, and intellectually. In practical terms the plan involved the formation of a society of women only, with a penny a week subscription,

65. Crisis, April 20, 1833, pp. 119-120.

in which class differences would be broken down and in which women would become conscious of their power to free themselves from existing errors and would be taught by one another how best they could exert that power for the benefit of the whole human race⁶⁶.

The socialist's practical projects aimed at furthering feminist goals, like the two mentioned above, were generally short-lived, as were most of their other practical experiments. Nevertheless, by encouraging such combinations among females, the socialists helped to usher in a new stage in the feminist movement, characterised by the unification of groups of women in pursuit of common aims rather than by the protests of isolated individuals like Mary Wollstonecraft. Some of the male trade unionists felt that the socialists were going too far in this respect, and they harboured feelings of jealousy against the female trade unionists. One female socialist, writing in the Crisis of March 8, 1834, attributed this attitude to "the tyrannical spirit of the male" and warned that "if they deny our right to unite and claim equal privileges with men, we deny their right to unite and claim equal privileges with their masters". She felt that it was up to women to defend their own interests and warned them that, if they depended upon men, the men would become women's masters⁶⁷.

By encouraging the equal participation of women in their activities, the socialists enabled them to practice new and unfamiliar roles, and thus to take a large practical step toward gaining confidence in their ability to take on the responsibility of full equality with men. But, as

66. Crisis, Aug. 17, 1833, p. 263; Sept. 7, 1833, p. 6 (letter from "one of the projectors").

67. Crisis, March 8, 1834, p. 230 (letter from "A woman").

well as advancing the emancipation of women within the socialist movement, individual socialists also promoted women's rights in the many other causes with which they involved themselves. Most significantly, socialist influence accounted for the spread of feminist ideas in the cooperative, trade union, and chartist movements, but their influence was also felt in less obvious places. For example, the inclusion of a provision allowing women full membership, in the 1846 constitution of the Whittington Club, a middle-class cooperative venture, may have been the result of the presence of Owenites such as Lloyd Jones, George Holyoake, W.H. Ashurst, and possibly "Kate" among the club's founding members⁶⁸.

Since their views on women were contrary to prevailing and deep-rooted beliefs and practices, the socialists realized that only limited progress toward emancipation could be achieved by their propagandising work or by the activities of the socialist branches. They believed that the way forward lay in building small socialist communities where men and women would live as equals, and relying on the force of example provided by the communities to convince society at large of the desirability of change⁶⁹. It was within these communities that the socialists had the greatest scope for experimenting with the creation of a new position for women.

According to Muncy, there was a basic pattern common to all the Owenite community proposals on both sides of the Atlantic. Women were to have economic independence from their husbands, the right to share in decision-making in the community, and an equal education. In some communities there

68. Kent, "The Whittington Club".

69. New Moral World, Jan. 26, 1839, pp. 210-211 (article by "W.W.P.").

were no distinctions regarding occupations. Moreover, the women were promised relief from household chores and child care, which became the responsibility of the community⁷⁰. An example is the scheme proposed by the London Cooperative Society, which provided for absolute equality for women, the application of science to free them from the burdens of domestic drudgery, and communal care and education of children and orphans⁷¹. Another example is the original New Harmony community where women were given an equal voice with men in legislation (possibly the first example of women's suffrage in America), and where women were encouraged to take full advantage of equal rights and privileges. The schools at New Harmony, which were co-educational and therefore became a target for public criticism, removed a great burden from mothers and were intended to bring up the sexes to regard one another as equals. There was also a women's social society, founded in 1826 by Frances Wright, which was the first fully organized women's club in America⁷².

Most other American secular communes of the early nineteenth century, and particularly those of the Fourierists and Transcendentalists, had plans for the emancipation of female members that were similar to those of the Owenites⁷³. However, the orthodox view of women was at that time so ingrained in the minds of most people that these plans were doomed to failure. From his study of early nineteenth-century American communities,

70. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 14-15, 218.

71. John Gray, A Lecture on Human Happiness...to which are Added the Articles of Agreement Drawn-Up and Recommended by the London Cooperative Society for the Formation of a Community on Principles of Mutual Cooperation, Within Fifty Miles of London (1825. Reprinted, London. 1831), pp. 6-8 of Articles.

72. Lockwood, New Harmony Communities, p. 175. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 218-219.

73. Muncy, Utopian Communities, p. 221. Violette, Economic Feminism, p. 98.

Muncy concludes that women were, on the whole, less inclined toward communitarianism than were men, despite the promises of relief from the burdensome duties of endless housekeeping chores and perpetual care of children, and that most women who had entered communities had followed their husband's decision. Muncy also suggests that monogamous familism in ordinary society assigned women a role more in keeping with their maternal instincts and traditional upbringing⁷⁴. But, if the Owenites failed to establish a lasting community based on equality of the sexes, they did at least make some of the first attempts in both Britain and America to implement women's emancipation in practice. In this, and in their encouragement of women's involvement in the life of socialist branches, the socialists provided a source of inspiration for the feminist movement which, along with their theoretical and propagandising contribution, entitle them to be ranked among the movement's foremost pioneers.

74. Muncy, Utopian Communities, pp. 215-216.

Chapter Four

SOCIALISM AND THE BIRTH CONTROL MOVEMENT

Section 1. It might be inferred from the Owenite socialists' ardent support for women's emancipation, of which liberation from the burden of continual childbearing would seem an obvious aspect, and from their belief that sexual passions ought to be gratified, that they would support birth control as a means of reconciling the two aims. However, there was even less precedent in early nineteenth-century Britain or America for advocacy of birth control than for feminism, and even the early feminists were mostly not supporters of this cause. The socialists were themselves by no means as outspoken on birth control as they were on marriage and women, but the evidence suggests that they were, on the whole, sympathetic to the idea.

The widespread influence of Thomas Malthus' pessimistic population theory during the early nineteenth century naturally gave some stimulus to the birth control movement as a possible solution. As Peter Fryer observes, Malthus himself was too devout an upholder of traditional morality to support a means of allowing the lower orders to enjoy sexual pleasure without incurring the penalty of excessively large families, and he would only allow "moral restraint" as a solution to the problem of overpopulation¹. But some of the utilitarians, who were influenced by Malthus' theories yet who were less austere than he, tended to be sympathetic to birth control. Among them were Jeremy Bentham, Joseph Townsend, and James Mill². The most outspoken of the utilitarians on this topic was,

1. Peter Fryer, The Birth Controllers (New York, 1966), p. 70.

2. Ibid, pp. 67-69, 71.

however, Francis Place who, in the early 1820s, energetically campaigned to propagate the idea of the "preventive check". His Illustrations and Proofs of the Principles of Population,³ published in 1822, provided for the first time a social and economic theory in support of contraceptive practices, which he regarded as an answer to Malthus' fear of overpopulation⁴. Place attempted to publicise the use of these practices in a series of anonymous handbills directed to all but particularly to the lower classes of both sexes, which provided practical contraceptive instruction. He recommended the use of the sponge in the vagina during intercourse, which he claimed was simple and harmless and did not diminish enjoyment. In this campaign, he gained the assistance of many influential working men, and in particular the editors of a number of unstamped working-class newspapers, and the handbills circulated in thousands to the working class in the North⁵. Place also enlisted the support of the young John Stuart Mill and of the freethinker, Richard Carlile. In 1825, Richard Carlile wrote What is Love?, in which he discussed the medical, economic and social aspects of contraception. Carlile was so outspoken that he embarrassed even the supporters of birth control. He regarded love as a natural and delightful passion and saw contraception as a means of removing the great bar to love provided by undesired conception. By 1826 the work was in its third edition, and by 1828 Carlile claimed to have sold over 10,000 copies⁶.

3. Francis Place, Illustrations and Proofs of the Principles of Population (1930 ed. Reprinted, New York, 1967), pp. 157-179.

4. Norman E. Himes, Medical History of Contraception (1936. Reprinted, New York, 1970) pp. 209-223.

5. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 43-46, 71-74.

6. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 44-47, 74-77. The second edition of Feb., 1826, in addition to the sponge also briefly mentioned the "skin" or "glove" and partial or complete withdrawal.

As Norman Himes observes, although some knowledge of birth control had long been present, at least among the upper classes, the propaganda of Place and Carlile was probably the first organized attempt to educate the masses in contraceptive technique and marked the first step in the democratization of contraceptive knowledge⁷. However, the campaign had no immediate effect upon the birth rate among either the lower, middle, or upper classes in Britain,⁸ and, as J.A. and Olive Banks have shown, there was no significant reawakening of birth control propaganda until the 1860s⁹. Not only were such ideas opposed by the whole force of the establishment during the first half of the century, and their expression made illegal by the laws against blasphemy, but they also incurred the bitter hostility of many radicals, trade unionists, and chartists. Thomas Wooler's Black Dwarf, for example, denied that contraception was necessary and claimed that limitation of birth could safely be left to Providence. The journal also asserted that contraception would destroy female morals and encourage prostitution by removing the dread of its consequences. William Cobbett's criticisms of Place's ideas were similar but harsher and more personal¹⁰. A section of the young trade union press was also hostile. The Trades Newspaper and Mechanic's Weekly Journal, for instance, saw birth control ideas as "detestably wretched" and called for public scorn and punishment for their propagators. Even many chartists, including

7. Himes, Medical History of Contraception, pp. 209-223.

8. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 85-86.

9. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, p. 25.

10. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 79-80.

Bronterre O'Brien and Feargus O'Connor, regarded the campaign as an ultra-reactionary manifestation of Malthusianism¹¹. Birth control agitation, having thus become unfortunately associated with the same Malthusian philosophy that was behind the new poor law of 1834, died down during the 1830s when, as Fryer notes, chartism appeared to offer more thorough-going solutions to the problems of the working class. Nevertheless, birth control ideas had, according to Fryer, become part of the accepted background of the freethinkers among the advanced radicals, and there followed a period of limited percolation downward of contraceptive knowledge, the effects of which became clear in the second half of the century¹². By the 1870s, the British birth-rate had begun to decline and contraception had become an established practice, at least among the upper and middle classes¹³.

It is noteworthy that the great majority of those who worked for the equality of the sexes during the nineteenth century ignored the cause of birth control¹⁴. J.A. and Olive Banks conclude from their research into the relationship between feminism and family planning that "the feminist movement as such was not a causal factor in the advent of family planning, and any of its activities which may validly be linked

11. Ibid, pp. 81-82.

12. Ibid, pp. 107-108.

13. William L. Langer, "The Origins of the Birth Control Movement in England in the Early Nineteenth-Century", Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Spring 1975, pp. 669-686.

14. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, p. 121. A notable exception was John Stuart Mill, who specifically linked the rights of women with the population question and argued that over-population would probably diminish greatly as a result of the industrial and social independence of women. Ibid. p. 24.

with this development are to be seen as consequences not only unanticipated but, if they had been anticipated, almost certainly unapproved"¹⁵. They claim that the movement toward family limitation in the late nineteenth century proceeded independently of the efforts of the feminists, who did not regard the burden of child-bearing as a problem at this time. As a consequence of their strict and generally conventional attitude toward sexual morality, the feminists were, on the whole, hostile to neo-Malthusianism¹⁶. And when family limitation began to become popular in the late nineteenth century, it appears to have been the males who took the initiative¹⁷.

Section 2. The socialists were far less outspoken on the issue of birth control than they were on marriage and women, and in fact their views on this matter were rather obscure. In 1823, Francis Place, hoping to further his efforts to win over the working class to his birth control campaign, spread the rumour that Robert Owen had learnt of contraceptive practices during his visit to France in 1818 and had brought back several "specimens" to England. Owen allegedly regarded contraception as an answer to objections made by Place and by James Mill that his proposed cooperative communities would cause overpopulation by reducing deaths from vice, misery, and bad management. This rumour was taken up by both supporters and opponents of birth control, was published in Wooler's Black Dwarf and in Carlile's Republican, and was extended to include the allegation that Owen had already introduced these practices at New Lanark. Despite widespread circulation of this story, Owen did not reply until

15. Ibid, pp. 128-129.

16. Ibid, p. 106.

17. Ibid, p. 130.

1827, probably because he was in America during most of the intervening period and was unaware that it was in circulation. In 1827 he unequivocally denied that he had ever introduced contraceptives into England or that he had discussed artificial checks with any of the continentals with whom he had recently had contact, and at the same time he reiterated his optimistic views on population. Whilst he did not mention the allegation that contraceptives were in use at New Lanark, there is, according to Norman Himes, absolutely no reliable evidence for this¹⁸. But the rumour concerning Owen's trip to France appears to have pre-dated Place's attempt to use Owen's name in forwarding his propaganda. Moreover, as Fryer points out, the possibility that there may have been fire where there was smoke is indicated by documents in the Owen collection at Manchester which reveal his interest in the technique of contraception¹⁹. And J.F.C. Harrison claims that, although Owen's exact role in the birth control movement is somewhat obscure, he was undoubtedly involved in it from 1823²⁰.

The reticence of Robert Owen and many of his followers concerning birth control stands in sharp contrast to their openness in discussing religion, morality, marriage, women, sexual relationships, and prostitution. This suggests that the reticence was not due to lack of moral courage or any unwillingness to offend public opinion. More likely, it was a result of the socialists' optimistic views concerning population, which removed what, for the utilitarians, was the main inducement to support birth control. The socialists were, therefore, usually content with such vague statements

18. Norman E. Himes, "The Place of John Stuart Mill and of Robert Owen in the History of English Neo-Malthusianism", Quarterly Journal of Economics, Aug. 1928, pp. 633-640.

19. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 45, 283-284.

20. Harrison, Quest for New Moral World, pp. 60-61.

as that of Robert Owen to the effect that, in the unlikely event of population expanding till all the land of the earth was covered with federative townships or republics, as the earth would then be good, intelligent, and rational, people would know how best to deal with the situation²¹. On the other hand, the socialists did not share the moral objections of opponents of birth control, while they shared the utilitarians' opposition to certain tenets of Christian morality, the belief in happiness as the proper basis of morality, and the conviction that sexual relations were basically good and necessary for health and pleasure. Furthermore, the socialists' views on women's emancipation gave them a positive reason to support birth control. It is not surprising that, although the movement as a whole devoted little attention to the problem, those socialists who did discuss birth control, most notably William Thompson and Robert Dale Owen, supported it on the precise grounds of feminism and sexual liberation.

Section 3. William Thompson raised the matter of birth control in a section of his classic work, An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth, which was published in 1824²². Here he attacked the population theories of Malthus which, he maintained, were being used to frighten away all attempts at social improvement. Thompson argued that, although there was a physical possibility of population increasing faster than the quantity of food, human prudence could be used to regulate population increase. He claimed that such prudence already prevailed among the rich, whose numbers had to be kept up by recruits from the poorer classes.

21. Robert Owen, Revolution in Mind and Practice, p. 122.

22. Thompson, Inquiry, pp. 535-563.

It was possible to impart this prudence to all members of society, but the defenders of the present system, fearing that such knowledge would be incompatible with their institutions and their exploitation of the working people, put forward instead the theory that the masses inevitably destroyed their happiness by overbreeding the moment that they gained abundant food and increased comforts.

In opposition to Malthus, Thompson suggested that increased comforts of life achieved by any group of people always resulted in increased prudence respecting increase of numbers. Once people became used to increased material well-being, they would welcome any change that increased their standard of living and reject any change that would decrease it. This occurred even under the existing institutions of insecurity and without any instruction, and it would be all the more evident in a cooperative system where general security and knowledge were widely diffused. Such a system would produce abundant comforts for all and an unwillingness to part with them. Thompson believed that, although the inconveniences of a large family would not press so heavily upon the individual in a cooperative society as they did under competition, regard for the common welfare and common loss of comforts would replace the individual motive for prudence. In contrast to Malthus, Thompson claimed that the prudential check to child-birth was least felt where there were fewest comforts, since they that had little could lose little and breeding was one of their few pleasures.

Thompson envisaged that the married members of socialist communities would suffer no economic hardship from inequalities in the number of children, since all children would be equally educated and maintained at the common

board. The only inconveniences to which parents would be subjected were those of bearing the children and of attending and nourishing them during infancy. However, these inconveniences would alone induce most couples to limit their offspring. It was unnecessary to subject the parents of large families to financial hardships as a disincentive to procreation.

The only grounds that Thompson would accept for restraining the individual's choice of when and whom to marry was in circumstances where an increase in population was against the common interest, a situation that he believed was unlikely to occur for many generations. Being opposed to all restraint on the individual except when absolutely necessary for the happiness of the community, Thompson did not consider that even such a case of overpopulation justified compulsory laws. He felt that, if restraint were necessary, it should take the form of pressure of public opinion against early marriage and a shortage of private apartments in the community to encourage late marriage.

Thompson doubted whether it would be necessary to encourage late marriages, however, even if restraint of population increase was necessary. His advocacy of contraceptive practices provided the means by which early marriages, which the socialists believed desirable for health and virtue, could co-exist with a stationary population. In support of this solution, Thompson asserted that the encouragement of late marriages rather than the use of contraceptive techniques would increase the temptation to illicit intercourse and prostitution. Even where there was no necessity to limit population, Thompson believed that birth control could fulfill a useful function in enabling married couples to maximize their sexual enjoyment while avoiding the necessity for continual child-birth. Limitation of

offspring would be purely a matter of individual choice at such time, since it was prudent to have many children when society could provide for increasing numbers without a decreasing prosperity. It should also be noted that, while Thompson favoured early marriage to promote morality, he was not against casual intercourse among the unmarried in the cooperating communities, providing that it was based on free unbought affections, and where birth control would ensure that there was no risk to population or consequent evil to either of the parties involved.

Thompson's Inquiry was undoubtedly an important landmark in the history of the birth control movement. According to Richard Pankhurst, it was the first important work to come out openly in support of birth control²³. Both the theory that population pressure was a result of poverty and ignorance, and the advocacy of mass education for a rational population policy, were significant innovations²⁴. In his later writings, Thompson often returned to these themes. He also suggested that reform of the marriage laws along the lines proposed by the socialists would play a large part in regulating population increase. Under existing arrangements, reckless marriages could never be reversed or prevented from producing a large family, while couples who produced one illegitimate child were obliged to marry and thereby produce more children. Moreover, Thompson believed that the abolition of primogeniture would force parents desiring to maintain their estate intact to practice family limitation, as in fact was happening in post-revolutionary France. And lastly, he asserted that the emancipation of women would itself produce a diminution of population

23. Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 64.

24. Ibid, p. 62.

pressure: whereas men enjoyed only the pleasures of union, women, who encountered its pains, might be expected to show greater prudential foresight²⁵.

J.A. and Olive Banks observe that few of the many writings on the population controversy sparked off by Malthus considered the question from the viewpoint of child-bearing. Similarly, Mary Wollstonecraft's treatise on women, which had been largely ignored while the population controversy raged, did not contribute to the population discussion. Wollstonecraft's aim was to educate women to make them better mothers rather than to relieve them of the burdens of maternal duties²⁶. In contrast to Wollstonecraft, William Thompson did not greatly value domestic virtues. He regarded the home as "the eternal prison house of the wife", everything in it, including his "breeding-machine", being the property of the man²⁷. Thompson regarded the rearing of children as a necessary but not all-important function. He felt it should never be allowed to interfere with more socially useful functions, and that women should always have it in their power to prevent the occurrence of child-birth in order freely to participate in political activities²⁸. Because the bearing and rearing of children fell upon women, Thompson saw that they tended more to domesticity than did men and had less opportunity for mixing in society and therefore less opportunity of exerting influence to attain their ends or to protect themselves. This made it even more important for women to engage in political activity than for men, and Thompson believed that association or labour by mutual cooperation would ensure such

25. Ibid, pp. 63-64, 115-116.

26. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, pp. 16-17.

27. Thompson, Appeal of One-Half the Human Race, pp. 79, 85.

28. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, p. 19.

political activity²⁹. Thompson's conclusion that the status of women and the population question were interrelated was ignored by the orthodox press, however, as a result of the prevailing prejudice against birth control. The subject was not revived until 1848, when John Stuart Mill published his Principles of Economics³⁰.

Thompson's reasons for supporting birth control differed radically from those of the utilitarians and he considered it most unlikely that prudential population checks within the existing system could alone accomplish "even the pitiful objects of their partisans". An influx of competitors from elsewhere would soon destroy any gains secured by restricting the number of workers in a given occupation or area, while the capitalist could always move his capital in search of cheaper labour. Also, employers might take advantage of smaller families by reducing the workers' wages, which would as a result fall beneath the subsistence level for those with large families to support. Finally, since a labourer could not predict employment prospects a generation ahead, he could not plan the number of his children accordingly³¹. Thompson's support of birth control was based upon moral, social and long-term population considerations rather than upon any faith in birth control as a remedy for economic ills.

Section 4. An even greater contribution to the birth control movement than that of William Thompson was made by Robert Dale Owen, who was America's first birth control pioneer and the founder of the neo-Malthusian school of thought in that country as well as being a writer of European

29. Ibid, pp. 20-21. Thompson, Appeal of One-Half the Human Race, pp. 177-181.

30. Banks and Banks, Feminism and Family Planning, pp. 20-21.

31. William Thompson, Labour Rewarded (1827. Reprinted, New York, 1969), pp. 68-75. Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 114.

influence³². Having come under attack for his known sympathy to birth control, R.D. Owen was led to defend and elaborate his opinions on population in the Free Enquirer, in a series of three articles summarizing the economic and social case for birth control³³. This was followed, early in 1831, by the appearance of his Moral Physiology: or a Brief and Plain Treatise on the Population Question, a booklet of 72 pages³⁴.

R.D. Owen was more inclined than were the majority of the socialists to accept certain Malthusian theories. He agreed that, if population were allowed to grow unrestrained, it would inevitably increase beyond the level that the earth could support. However, he rejected Malthus' suggested remedy of late marriages with celibacy before marriage, which he believed was certain to result in increased prostitution and intemperance, and destruction of health, and the ruin of moral feelings. He also felt that the scheme was impracticable because most individuals simply would not stop to calculate the chances of the world's being overpeopled before they indulged in sexual relations. Many of Malthus' disciples made similar criticisms but, while they concluded that vice, poverty, war, and misery were therefore inevitable and necessary to check population growth and that this justified existing inequalities, R.D. Owen set out to promote a "less ascetic and more practicable species of moral restraint"³⁵.

The younger Owen regarded Malthusian population doctrine as a serious argument against social reform and human improvement. The argument merited

32. Norman E. Himes, "Robert Dale Owen, the Pioneer of American neo-Malthusianism", American Journal of Sociology, Jan. 1930, p. 530.

33. Ibid, pp. 530-538. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 89, 91-92.

34. Robert Dale Owen, Moral Physiology: or a Brief and Plain Treatise on the Population Question, 10th edn., (New York, 1858).

35. Ibid, pp. 22-28.

a serious answer, but such an answer had not been forthcoming from the friends of reform, who preferred to evade the issue. R.D. Owen did not accept that there was an actual excess of population anywhere in the world, excepting perhaps China, and he claimed that there was enough land in every country of Europe to support all its present inhabitants in comfort. The real causes of distress were, he believed, mis-government, monopolies, taxation, and commercial rivalry, all of which favoured the rich, and these evils could not be removed merely by answering the population question. But he felt that such an answer would both forestall the potential danger of future overpopulation and offer alleviation of existing evils by removing that pressure of a large family on the labouring man which so augmented his distress and distracted him from seeking necessary political reforms³⁶. Like Thompson, R.D. Owen regarded birth control as a palliative for diminishing suffering but not a remedy and he too warned that, in the unlikely case of all poor parents limiting their offspring, it might furnish an excuse for their employers to reduce wages to the level of individual subsistence³⁷.

Important as were the economic grounds for exercising control over the reproductive instinct, Robert Dale Owen regarded the social grounds as being of even greater importance. For married working-class couples, the power of limiting their offspring to their circumstances might free them from lives of incessant labour and allow them to enjoy comfort and comparative affluence. In particular, it might free the mother from the sacrifice of her comfort, health, and perhaps even life, through continual child-births³⁸.

36. Ibid, pp. 30-31.

37. Ibid, p. 77 (appendix to 5th edn.).

38. Ibid, pp. 32-33.

Indeed, R.D. Owen considered it an imperative moral obligation that no man ought to desire a woman to become the mother of his children unless it was her express wish and unless he knew it to be for her welfare that she should. He believed that no man ought to ask "that the whole life of an intellectual, cultivated woman, should be spent in bearing a family of twelve or fifteen children; to the ruin, perhaps, of her constitution, if not to the overstocking of the world"³⁹. A further advantage of birth control, R.D. Owen pointed out, was the power it would give couples to delay having children until they were satisfied of the permanency of their feelings toward one another⁴⁰.

The unmarried young would also, in Robert Dale Owen's opinion, benefit from the power of limiting offspring. He argued that, since public opinion disapproved of sexual connections outside of marriage, almost all young persons would desire to marry immediately, on reaching the age of maturity, were it not for prudential considerations. However, the young man often postponed marriage until he had acquired the means to support a family. In the meantime, his passions being strong and the temptations great, he was liable to enter the company of prostitutes and to sink into a life of dissipation and excess, at the expense of his health and moral feelings, the only passion he retained being that of avarice⁴¹. Wiser individuals might prefer celibacy to dissipation but, although a lesser evil, this was still fraught with many dangers. One of these was "solitary vice" or onanism, which R.D. Owen considered unnatural and for which there would be no temptation were it not for the "anti-social and

39. Ibid, p. 39.

40. Ibid, p. 53.

41. Ibid, pp. 39-41.

demoralizing relation in which the sexes stand to each other, in almost all countries". In extreme cases, celibacy might result in disease or even insanity and in all cases, R.D. Owen asserted, it was a cause of physical, mental, and moral suffering. Moreover, denial of the sexual instinct unsettled the mind, warped the judgement because the repressed instinct assumed an undue importance in one's thoughts that it would not obtain in a life of satisfied affection, and gave rise to peevishness, restlessness, and instability of character⁴². R.D. Owen concluded that the knowledge that would enable young persons to form "moral connections" and marry early but resolve not to become parents until prudence permitted it, would save much unhappiness and prevent many crimes⁴³. To further this argument, he asserted that family limitation was commonplace among all classes in France, which he regarded as the most civilized, refined and socially cultivated nation in the world⁴⁴.

Behind his support of birth control lay Robert Dale Owen's theory that the sexual instinct should be regarded in a two-fold light: first as giving the power of reproduction and thereby perpetuating the species; and second as affording pleasure. Regarding the latter aspect, he believed the instinct to be the most social and kindly and the least selfish of human instincts and considered its influence to be moral, humanising, polishing, and generally beneficent. Although he regarded the sexual instinct as a source of misery in the existing "profligate and hypocritical world", he did not consider it to be sensual or degrading in itself and he insisted that

42. Ibid, pp. 41-43.

43. Ibid, p. 43.

44. Ibid, pp. 37-38.

its mortification, at the very least, froze and stiffened the character by blocking its kindest emotions and gave it a solitary, antisocial, and selfish stamp⁴⁵.

Having thus justified control of the reproductive functions of sexual intercourse while allowing the pleasure-giving functions to be temperately enjoyed, Robert Dale Owen outlined the method by which this might be effected. He suggested complete withdrawal on the part of the man immediately previous to emission, claiming this was in all cases effectual and was the method universally practiced by the cultivated classes on the continent⁴⁶. It is likely that Owen's claim was nearer the truth than was that of Place and Carlile, who asserted that the vaginal sponge was the method used on the continent to keep down population. As Langer points out, withdrawal was the simplest, most obvious, and most reliable method of birth control then available. The sponge was a clumsy arrangement, hardly feasible among the lower classes who lived seven or eight in a room, without privacy, running water, or even the most primitive conveniences⁴⁷. R.D. Owen would not recommend partial withdrawal because it was not infallible. He also dismissed the sponge as being of doubtful efficacy and physically disagreeable and the "baudruch" (condom) as being in every way inconvenient⁴⁸. He considered the diminution of pleasure that withdrawal entailed to be trifling when set against the welfare of the woman and the risk of incurring heavy responsibilities, and he claimed that in France the matter was considered a point of honour on the part of the male⁴⁹. Furthermore, he believed that

45. Ibid, pp. 13-17.

46. Ibid, p. 61.

47. Langer, "Origins of the Birth Control Movement in England".

48. Robert Dale Owen, Moral Physiology, p. 66.

49. Ibid, pp. 61-62.

the mere act of animal satisfaction was but a small item in the aggregate of enjoyment derived from satisfied affection, the chief charm of human intercourse being "...the gratification of the social feelings - the repose of the affections..."⁵⁰. He asserted that the practice of withdrawal did not harm one's health and that it had even been said "...to produce upon the human system an effect similar to that of temperance in diet"⁵¹. Such views were in harmony with the socialists' doctrine that true chastity consisted of the temperate satisfaction, without injury to others, of all one's natural desires. It was also in keeping with R.D. Owen's personal inclinations. He doubted whether nature would permit sexual intercourse, without injury to the average constitution, more often than once a week. And he was certain that "temperance positively forbids such indulgence, at any rate, more than twice a week; and that he trifles with his constitution who neglects the prohibition"⁵². In a similar vein, he criticised the "almost universal custom" in England of man and wife "continually occupying the same bed", to which custom he attributed much of the rudeness, indifference, and carelessness toward one another's feelings that prevailed in married life. Such forced and too frequent familiarity, he asserted, lessened the charms and pleasures of the relationship and diminished mutual respect⁵³.

R.D. Owen deplored the undue share of human thoughts that was occupied by the sexual instinct, but he believed this instinct was best regulated, not by restraints and by keeping the population in ignorance, but by encouraging the cultivation of body and mind and by providing useful occupation for

50. Ibid, p. 63.

51. Ibid, p. 66.

52. Ibid, pp. 79-80. This statement occurs in a footnote in the appendix to the 5th edn.

53. Ibid, pp. 54-55.

all⁵⁴.

Moral Physiology was America's first booklet on birth control⁵⁵. Richard Leopold describes it as "a bold but decently written tract" and as "the most temperate, refined, and readable of the nineteenth-century tracts on birth control"⁵⁶. And Norman Himes comments that the ideas are presented with great energy, in good taste and in "a literary style never surpassed by any writer on population"⁵⁷. The book had a mixed reception in America. Ex-President Madison was among those who praised it, but needless to say, it had many opponents. Among them were Quakers, liberals and radicals, notably the agrarian reformer, Thomas Skidmore, who was a rival of Robert Dale Owen for the leadership of the American workers movement⁵⁸. Frances Wright, although sharing Robert Dale Owen's views on population, gave him only mild encouragement in circulating Moral Physiology, urging him in a letter from Paris to proceed with caution and pointing out some of the practical difficulties in the way of a favourable reception⁵⁹. Although the American press was generally silent regarding the book, it nevertheless sold 1,500 copies within five months and went through nine editions in five years in the United States. In 1874, its author claimed a combined circulation for Britain and America of 50,000 to 60,000 copies, or approximately 1,000 a year.

54. Ibid, pp. 70-72.

55. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, p. 89.

56. Leopold, Robert Dale Owen, pp. 80, 84.

57. Himes, "Robert Dale Owen", p. 54.

58. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 93-94. Leopold, Robert Dale Owen, pp. 81-82.

59. Himes, "Robert Dale Owen", pp. 538-539.

Himes estimates that America counted for perhaps 20,000 to 25,000 of these, and regards this as a rather extensive circulation, considering that the population of the United States was under thirteen million in 1830 and still under forty million in 1870, that the percentage who could read was much lower then, and that advertisements were restricted to two freethinking journals⁶⁰. Moreover, it is likely that many copies had more than one reader.

The first English edition of Moral Physiology appeared in October 1832, without authorisation and containing many mistakes. It was published by James Watson, who put out at least another five editions in the next twenty years. In 1832, according to Fryer, Robert Dale Owen visited Richard Carlile in prison and also met Francis Place, who approved the book and suggested an English edition of 3,000 copies. Disregarding his father's warnings of the danger in such a course, R.D. Owen revised an edition for John Brooks, which was published in 1832. The doubts of his father eventually proved to be well founded for, during a debate with John Brindley in Bristol in 1841, the book was used to discredit the elder Owen⁶¹. Both editions of the book were advertised on various occasions in the Crisis, and on one occasion it was described as being of first importance "...not only as a reply to Malthus, but also as supplying to every mother and father of a family the knowledge by which, without injury to health, or violence to the moral feeling, any further increase which is not desired may be prevented"⁶².

60. Robert Dale Owen, "An Earnest Sowing of Wild Oats", Atlantic Monthly, July 1874, p. 77. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, p. 94. Himes, "Robert Dale Owen", p. 546.

61. Fryer, The Birth Controllers, pp. 94-95.

62. Crisis, Dec. 29, 1832, p. 172.

Norman Himes interprets Robert Dale Owen's emphasis as essentially Malthusian with merely vestiges of Owenite optimism in his population theory⁶³. In view of the fact that Moral Physiology was written during the most radical period of the younger Owen's life when, if anything, he was even more militant than his father in propagating socialist ideas, this is hardly an accurate interpretation. Moreover, the ideas presented in Moral Physiology are entirely consistent with socialist views on economics, morality, women and sexual relations, with the sole exception of R.D. Owen's greater sympathy for Malthus' views on population, and on this question the younger Owen's views resembled those of William Thompson. It was because of their interest in the population controversy that both Thompson and R.D. Owen were induced to champion the cause of birth control. However, their views on this issue were apparently received sympathetically by the socialist movement, if not upon the grounds of population, then at least upon those of morality and women's emancipation.

It is difficult, finally, to ascertain the effect of socialist birth control propaganda. Himes concludes that there is no doubt that Moral Physiology, through its direct and indirect influence, was a causative factor in the declining birth rate, but that no one will ever know exactly how extensive that influence was⁶⁴. Apart from its direct influence, it is generally agreed that the book exerted a considerable indirect influence through its impact upon the Massachusetts physician, Dr. Charles Knowlton, the most influential of the early birth control pioneers, whose Fruits of Philosophy (1832) ultimately had an important effect upon the birth rate

63. Himes, "Robert Dale Owen", p. 543.

64. Ibid, p. 546.

in England⁶⁵. Knowlton, in fact, took most of his social and economic ideas from Robert Dale Owen. It is also noteworthy that recent studies indicate that, even in the twentieth century when mechanical means of contraception had become common, some seventy per cent of French and British users employed withdrawal, the method that had been suggested in Moral Physiology⁶⁶.

The writings of William Thompson and Robert Dale Owen on the question of birth control were important landmarks in the birth control movement, making a significant contribution to the social and economic arguments in support of contraception that were first tentatively put forward in the early nineteenth century and that later took root and effected a major social change. Since their views on birth control were clearly derived from their socialist background, we may consider their contribution to be also that of the socialist movement.

65. Ibid, p. 546-554. Langer, "Origins of the Birth Control Movement in England".

66. Langer, Op Cit, p. 682 (footnote).

Chapter Five

HEALTH AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Section 1. Some of the most interesting and original ideas of the Owenite socialists were those concerning health, an aspect of their philosophy that has usually been ignored by historians. It is appropriate to consider the matter here, since the socialists' views on the issues dealt with in the foregoing chapters were closely connected with their views on health, and may be seen from a new perspective when placed in this context.

At a time when all branches of medicine were still primitive and when there was little public knowledge of the means of preserving good health, the socialists suggested the concept of preventative health care as an integral aspect of the lifestyle of society, an idea which has only in recent years begun to gain widespread acceptance. This concept was derived from one of the essential conditions that Robert Owen set out as necessary to human happiness, namely "the possession of a good organization, physical, mental and moral"¹.

The socialists asserted that, if individuals were taught during childhood a knowledge of the workings of the human body and the precautions necessary to preserve its functions, most illness could be cured or, even better, prevented. An important aspect of this knowledge was an awareness of the consequences of excess, and it was upon considerations of health that the socialists based their advocacy of temperance in the enjoyment of all human instincts and their condemnation of anything in society that tempted people to excess, such as ginshops and brothels. The fact that

1. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 6.

existing society exposed individuals to such temptations and also kept them in ignorance about their bodies and how to retain their health was attributed by the socialists to competitive society and the medical payment system, which gave the medical profession a vested interest in disease. Similarly, physicians profited by the psychological disorders produced by contemporary morality. The short-term remedy proposed by the socialists was to pay physicians in proportion as mankind escaped disease, so that it would be in their interests that mankind be temperate and rational. In the long term, the socialists envisaged people becoming their own physicians. Being the best judges of their own sensations, individuals could detect symptoms in themselves that were hidden from the physician, and, since they had the most experience of their own constitutions, they could, even with an inferior knowledge of medical science, prescribe more effectively for themselves than a physician could for them. Physicians could then be dispensed with, as a separate body, and could be employed in educative or productive activities, with an immense saving of wealth to society².

Section 2. This self-reliant approach was the more positive aspect of socialist ideas on health. But equally important were their critical comments upon the dangers to health inherent in many of the circumstances of capitalist society. The two essential conditions that Robert Owen laid down as essential to ensure a healthy race were, firstly, that a "superior organization" should be produced in each infant at birth and, secondly, that each individual should have the means to retain good health throughout

2. Crisis, Dec. 8, 1832, p. 159 (article by Robert Dale Owen on physicians); March 9, 1833 (report of lecture by Robert Owen); June 28, 1834, p. 93. New Moral World, March 27, 1841 (article by John Goodwyn Barmby on "Socialist-arian views on the medical and surgical profession", chapter 1). Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, II, 13.

his life³. In competitive society, he claimed, both these objectives were frustrated.

The effect of the "errors" of existing society upon unions among the sexes was the birth of infants with "inferior organizations", Owen claimed, and this obstructed the first of the essential conditions to racial improvement. In the first place, existing morality made hypocrisy general, prevented "natural" unions of the sexes, and made impossible the existence in couples of the state of mind and feelings that were essential to producing offspring healthy in body and mind. This was particularly the case when couples were forced to live together and procreate even when they were lacking in mutual affection. Secondly, the unsound state of mind that superstition and religious bigotry often produced in parents tended to be passed on to their children. Thirdly, children might inherit from the parents physical and mental disease brought about by disappointment of the affections. Fourthly, the evils produced by poverty and fear of poverty among the working class, along with financial difficulties and competition for wealth and power among the middle and upper classes, caused perplexity and suffering to the parents which adversely affected the organization of their offspring at birth. And finally, the great anxiety which many parents experienced regarding the well-being of their early children, who tended to obey the laws of nature rather than the "unwise" laws of man, tended to injure the organization of any further children born to them⁴.

Following Robert Owen's lead, the socialists placed great faith in the extent to which modification of the social environment would improve the physical and mental health of the newly-born and thus eventually result in enormous genetic improvement of the race. Indeed, genetic improvement

3. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 12.

4. Ibid, III, 6-11.

became a common theme of the socialists and it is against this ideological background that Robert Dale Owen's views on eugenics should be considered. In his Moral Physiology, he posited the view that it was an immorality that a human being should give birth to a child knowing that she would transmit to it hereditary disease. Also, he claimed, many women could not give birth to healthy children and it was therefore not moral that they should become pregnant. They could not be expected to lead lives of celibacy but, should they practice birth control and refrain from becoming parents, this would have a tremendously beneficial effect on the health, beauty, and physical improvement of the race⁵. R.D. Owen was the first of the birth control advocates to link the subject with eugenics; the other early birth controllers, both among the utilitarians and the socialists, confined themselves to the economic and social aspects⁶. However, the influence of socialist ideology upon Robert Dale Owen in this important contribution to the birth control controversy is obvious, since his arguments were clearly an extension of socialist views upon health and racial improvement into the area of birth control. His views on eugenics were taken up by Dr. Charles Knowlton and thereby became an important auxiliary feature of later discussions of birth control.

Regarding Robert Owen's second condition essential to a healthy race, he asserted that certain circumstances were necessary for the preservation of health throughout life, none of which could be met in competitive society. Foremost among these was the due cultivation of all the physical and mental faculties of each individual, requiring healthy alternate occupation of body and mind in proportion to the strength and

5. Robert Dale Owen, Moral Physiology, p. 34.

6. Norman E. Himes, "Eugenic Thought in the American Birth Control Movement 100 Years Ago", Eugenics, May 1929, pp. 3-8.

capacity of both. Such a balance was seldom achieved under the system of specialized production, where each was doomed to exert just one portion of his physical or mental faculties throughout his life⁷.

Among the natural propensities that needed temperate exercise, the socialists included the desire for food, sleep, rest, exercise, and sexual intercourse. It was a major objective of the socialist's proposed communities to encourage the temperate exercise of all these faculties in order to achieve health, satisfaction, and happiness. Science and technology were seen as playing a major role in these arrangements by superseding the necessity for the manual division of labour under which the individual was sacrificed to some insignificant function⁸.

A second circumstance that Robert Owen considered necessary for the maintenance of good health was that of kind treatment of the individual from birth to maturity, which was only possible in a system based upon Owen's "law" of character formation and was unattainable under individualism⁹. Owen also believed that, once each person understood this "law" and developed a resulting feeling of genuine charity, he would achieve a state of self-possession, inward satisfaction, and serenity of mind and feeling¹⁰. Mutual good feelings between oneself and one's fellows, such as would result from this knowledge, were necessary to satisfaction and therefore, indirectly, to health¹¹.

7. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 30-34.

8. Ibid, III, 20-23. Crisis, May 11, 1833, p. 142 (report of lecture by Robert Owen).

9. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 13-14.

10. Ibid, III, 35-38.

11. Ibid, III, 40-41.

A further condition necessary for preserving health was pure air¹².

Robert Owen proposed the replacement of large cities and extensive manufactories, which created an impure atmosphere harmful to health, by a more dispersed and decentralized system of production, distribution, government, and education, which would not pollute the environment¹³.

This would also provide suitable circumstances for regular exercise in the open air, another necessary condition for preserving health that was not attainable in a centralized system of dwelling and industry¹⁴.

Finally, the socialists appreciated that the maintenance of physical and mental health required the consumption of wholesome food in the proper quantities at proper times. The question of diet was important to the socialists both from the point of view of agricultural policy and from the point of view of health. In their discussion of agriculture, the socialists were concerned with what type of food should be produced as well as with techniques of agricultural production. Many socialists believed that a vegetarian diet would induce peace and love, while animal food, like alcohol, tended to induce extravagance and intemperance. They claimed that vegetable products were nutritious and strengthening for people with weak constitutions, but meat tended to corrupt the body and engender disease. Also, they argued that cultivation of crops instead of grazing of cattle would increase food production. However, other socialists disagreed with these arguments, claiming that if meat were not eaten there would not be sufficient

12. Incidentally to the question of pure air, the socialists also condemned tobacco as a poison which conservative nature exerted her utmost power against. See Crisis, Feb. 15, 1834, p. 206.

13. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 15-16.

14. Ibid, III, 19-20.

nourishment for the world¹⁵. Vegetarianism was sometimes practiced in the socialist communities. The majority of the residents at Queenwood, for example, abstained from animal food, although partly for economic reasons¹⁶. Similarly, the editors of the Free Enquirer in New York - Robert Dale Owen, Frances Wright, and Robert Jennings - lived during the years 1829 - 1830 "...in a most frugal manner, giving up tea and coffee, and using very little animal food..."¹⁷. Robert Owen observed that there had been little rational study of diet by the mass of the people, largely because the medical profession, who were best educated to understand the subject, were prevented by their desire for individual gain from giving their limited knowledge to the public. Owen maintained that each individual had a unique constitution and that he should be taught to observe the varied effects of the different kinds and quantities of food upon his own constitution and thus discover the diet most suited to him. Furthermore, Owen believed that, in the various kinds of food generally obtainable in most moderately populated parts of the world, every useful quality of medicine could be found for each constitution. He proposed that all individuals should be instructed from birth to know the particular kind and quality of food that was best for them at their various periods of life. Owen was also of the opinion that, although little was yet known of the best diet to sustain health, socialist communities would form ideal conditions

15. For examples of discussion on the question of diet see Crisis, Aug. 2, 1832, pp. 132-133 (editorial), and New Moral World, June 19, 1841, p. 390 (letter from "C.L."); July 31, 1841, p. 38 (letter from "Edinses"); Sept. 4, 1841, p. 75 (letter from "H.F."). A lengthy editorial in Crisis, Aug. 9, 1834, pp. 140-142, discusses the relative merits of different kinds of foods and the benefits of crop rotation. It was assumed that science would soon discover what proportions of animal and vegetable productions should be raised to maximise production. That which proved best for the soil would prove best for those who lived on it.

16. New Moral World, Oct. 15, 1842, p. 128.

17. Robert Dale Owen, "An Earnest Sowing of Wild Oats", p. 74.

to investigate this and all other topics concerning the "science of society". He felt that generally a simple diet would be found to keep body and mind in the best state. Under the proposed system of combined production and distribution of wealth, a full supply of the most wholesome foods would always be in store and want of necessities or beneficial comforts would never be experienced. In these circumstances, Owen believed, disease would rapidly diminish and would be unknown in two or three generations¹⁸.

Section 3. The socialists were also pioneers in the analysis of mental illness. In particular, they drew attention to the interconnections between mental disease, physical disease, diet, sexual and emotional frustration, and the circumstances of upbringing. They suggested that anxiety was a natural result of failure to give due exercise to any one of the faculties and that celibacy and sexual license, both products of prevailing customs and morality, were therefore equally unnatural and were productive of vice, misery, and disease. The unnatural restraints that society placed upon married women, and the connivance it gave to the libertinism of unmarried men, only profited the physicians. In sex, as in the other faculties, health and peace of mind were to be found only in moderation, the socialists concluded¹⁹. Thus, one returns again to the strong chain of reasoning on which Robert Dale Owen based his support for birth control.

In general terms, the socialists believed that both mental and physical disease were ultimately the product of ignorance, the two aspects of disease working to reinforce one another. Religion profited from disease

18. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 16-19. Pankhurst, William Thompson, p. 165.

19. Crisis, May 11, 1833, p. 142 (report of lecture by Robert Owen). Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, II, 12-13.

of the mind, while the medical profession profited from disease of the body, and the two parties assisted each other greatly²⁰. Insanity was a major area of concern for the socialists, and discussion of lunacy, lunatic asylums, and humane treatment of lunatics was common in the socialist press. They took the view that, to preserve permanent good health, it was necessary to take the state of the mind into consideration. They suggested that, if the mind was in a state of distress, the stomach would likely refuse to perform its functions in the same manner as previously, in which case the diet should be altered in quality or quantity. But, in the long term, the best remedy was to remove the social causes of mental distress²¹.

Section 4. The socialists drew up numerous detailed proposals for the practical implementation of health programs based on the above ideas. Most of their community schemes contained such health provisions as community doctors and guardians of the public health, as well as making arrangements for care of the aged and sick. The community proposals of the London Co-operative Society, for example, included the provision that the whole community would be guardians and nurses of the ill, particular superintendence being voluntary or by rotation. There would be rooms for the patients, with all the necessary scientific equipment, and private rooms for those who preferred them. Those community members whose voluntary occupation was the preservation of health would devote their skill to the speedy convalescence of the afflicted²². Other community schemes, such as those proposed by William Thompson,²³ included similar

20. Robert Owen, Book of New Moral World, III, 16.

21. Ibid, III, 18.

22. "Articles of Agreement of L.C.S.", pp. 13-14 (in Gray, Lecture on Human Happiness).

23. Pankhurst, William Thompson, pp. 163-165.

health provisions²⁴.

The socialists met with little success in the actual implementation of these schemes, because the cooperative communities that were a prerequisite to their introduction failed to survive for a sufficient length of time. The real importance of the socialist's contribution to the question of health, as with so many other of their areas of concern, lay in the ideas that they pioneered.

24. The most elaborate health scheme was that proposed by John Goodwyn Barmby in a three-part article on "Societarian views on the medical profession", which appeared in New Moral World, March 27, April 17, and June 26, 1841.

CONCLUSIONS

The Owenite socialist's views on the various issues pertaining to marriage, women, and the family, must be seen primarily as a logical extension of their general ideas on morality, religion, and economics, although these views were also influenced by the socialist's empirical observations of the harmful effects of existing arrangements upon human character. Their views on these issues fitted integrally into their whole system of philosophy, and should be taken into consideration in any attempt to assess the nature and aims of the Owenite socialist movement, or the significance of its intellectual and practical contribution to social change. Indeed, in their treatment of the questions of marriage and women the Owenites made perhaps their most original contribution. It is, therefore, unfortunate that historians have tended to neglect this aspect of the movement and to confine their attention to the socialists' economic theories and their contribution to communitarianism.

It was in their treatment of marriage and women that the socialists were most at variance with the intellectual and social trends of their time. Their unorthodox views on these matters did not reflect any widespread public desire for reform of existing arrangements, and it is not surprising that the socialists had little lasting success in their attempts to put these theories into practice. Nevertheless, these attempts fulfilled their purposes as practical experiments, which at least illustrated the possibilities that existed for change in the future. However, the chief contribution of the socialists to the questions of marriage and women lay in the originality of their ideas, and their largely unmeasurable long-term impact.

On the questions of marriage, the family, and sex, the Owenite socialists developed what was probably the most comprehensive critique of traditional mores and the most considered system of alternative arrangements that had yet been propagated by any organized group in the English-speaking world. By their ardour in disseminating these doctrines, they helped to bring about a greater frankness in discussing the issues of marriage, the family, and sex, and they brought many new ideas to the public attention which ultimately gained a wide following. The socialists' contribution to feminism, of which they were among the earliest and most radical exponents in both Britain and America, was of even greater significance. They evolved a thorough, coherent, and original feminist philosophy that was unique for the period, and they constituted the first organized feminist group in Britain, contributing practically to the feminist cause through their tireless propaganda for women's emancipation, their encouragement of the equal participation of women in the socialist movement, and their attempts to establish equality of the sexes in their experimental communities. Indeed, the contribution of the Owenite socialists to the feminist movement was of sufficient importance to suggest the desirability of revising the traditional view that dates the rise of organized feminism only from the period after 1850. Socialist views on the related issue of birth control were more obscure, but on the whole they appear to have been among the few in the early nineteenth century to have been sympathetic to this cause. Both William Thompson and Robert Dale Owen made major contributions to the birth control movement, and their views on this matter were undoubtedly a derivation from their general socialist beliefs. Finally, socialist views on all the above questions were closely interrelated with their ideas

concerning health and, when all these aspects of their philosophy are considered together, it is apparent that the socialists had developed a remarkably advanced and well-reasoned outlook upon the whole question of physical and mental health and its relationship to the social environment.

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Appendix A

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF THE OWENITE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

- 1771 - 1799. Robert Owen was born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire, the son of an ironmonger and saddler. He left home at the age of ten, and, after a number of years in the drapery business, moved into the cotton spinning industry, rapidly establishing a reputation as a successful manager.
1799. Robert Owen and his partners acquired the New Lanark Mills in Scotland, the largest cotton spinning establishment in Britain.
- 1800 - 1824. As sole manager and dominant partner, Robert Owen made New Lanark a model factory, placing great emphasis on schemes of education and social welfare for the employees.
- 1812 - 1824. Robert Owen's ideas became increasingly radical. Drawing eclectically from various strands of anti-capitalist thought, Owen formulated most of the theories that became the basis of the later Owenite socialist movement, and he began to talk of extending his ideas to society at large. At first he directed his appeal to the government and the upper classes, but his attack on the basic institutions of society, such as the family and the churches, soon lost him the support he had initially received from this quarter.
- 1824 - 1829. Impatient with the pace of social reform in Britain, Robert Owen left New Lanark and spent most of the next five years in America. He sank practically the whole of his fortune in a village and estate at New Harmony, Indiana, but the community

did not flourish, and the experiment came to an end in 1827. During this period, Owen established his reputation as a radical social reformer and began to attract followers in both Britain and America. Other Owenite socialist communities were established in America between 1825 and 1828 at Yellow Springs (Ohio), Franklin (New York), Forestville (New York), Kendal (Ohio), Valley Forge (Pennsylvania), and Blue Spring (Indiana). By 1828, it is probable they had all come to an end. Frances Wright founded a community at Nashoba (Tennessee) as a project to emancipate slaves. In Britain, some of Owen's followers founded a community at Orbiston (Scotland) in 1825, but it was abandoned in 1827.

1829. Robert Dale Owen, Frances Wright, and Robert L. Jennings moved to New York City, taking with them the New Harmony Gazette, which became the Free Enquirer and which continued publication until 1835. The Owenite socialists opened a "Hall of Science" in the Bowery, launched a campaign for the promotion of secularism, women's rights and, especially, a national system of free education for all, and organized an Association for the Protection of Industry and for the Promotion of National Education. They also aligned themselves with the newly formed New York Working Men's Party, but this organization soon split into factions and it dissolved after the election of 1830.

- 1829 - 1834. Robert Owen returned to Britain and, finding that his ideas had attracted working-class support, he found himself drawn

into the British working-class movement, which was dominated by Owenite theories during these five years. There was a rapid growth of producers' and consumers' cooperative societies. An Association for Promotion of Cooperative Knowledge was formed in the spring of 1829 in order to centralize cooperative effort and propaganda. By 1830, an estimated 400-500 cooperative societies were in existence. From May 1831 to April 1835, a series of eight cooperative congresses were held, composed of delegates from cooperative societies, labour exchanges and trade unions in all parts of the country. These meetings, which were held in a different town each time, became the nerve center of the Owenite socialist movement. Sixty-five cooperative societies were listed as represented at the first cooperative congress in Manchester, in May 1831. Although most had under a hundred members, they engaged in a wide range of manufactures. Twenty-nine societies each had funds of over £100, and the gross funds notified from all the societies was £6,500. A number of equitable labour exchanges were opened during this period, most notably the National Equitable Labour Exchange founded by Robert Owen in London in 1832. Various Owenite socialist journals were published, the most important of which was the Crisis, published from April 1832 to August 1834, and edited in turn by Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, and James Smith. The only significant Owenite community in this period was that at Ralahine in County Clare (Ireland), which lasted from 1831 to 1833 and was perhaps the most

successful of the early cooperative land schemes. The climax of this phase of the Owenite socialist movement was reached in 1834, with the formation of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, a great national federation of trades unions with an estimated membership of between a half million and a million, of which Robert Owen was the head. In April 1834, Owen led a procession of around 30,000 London trade unionists to present a petition against the sentences of the six Dorchester labourers (the Tolpuddle Martyrs) in March 1834. Owenism was at this time at the peak of its influence in the working-class and trade union movements.

1834 - 1845. With the collapse of the labour exchanges and the G.N.C.T.U., Robert Owen and his followers concentrated on propagating their views to the general public and developing an elaborate national organization as well as a network of local branches. By 1840, there were sixty-one chartered branches, and the nation was divided into fourteen main districts, each of which had a full-time social missionary appointed by the Central Board and paid a weekly wage of 13s. The missionaries, who were mostly intelligent, self-educated working men, visited regularly no fewer than 350 towns. There were annual congresses, composed of delegates from the branches, and a tract committee, which distributed two and a half million tracts during 1839-1841 when the organization was at its peak. Around this time, 1450 lectures were delivered in a year, and Owenite Sunday lectures were attended by up to

50,000 weekly. By 1841, it was estimated that £32,000 had been invested in constructing meeting halls or Halls of Science in many large towns, which were now capable of holding 22,000 people. The membership of the branches appears to have been very diversified, but was most commonly drawn from the best-paid strata of the local working class, and the main strength of the movement was in the industrial areas of London, the Midlands and the North. The most important Owenite journal during this period was the New Moral World, published from November 1834 to September 1845. The most important of its editors were Robert Owen and G.A. Fleming. By 1840, its circulation was estimated at 2000, each copy being read by perhaps 200 people. The Owenite socialists also acquired an extensive estate in Hampshire, which, from 1839 to 1845, was the site of the Queenwood community, the last significant Owenite community in Britain.

1843. The general communitarian revival in America in 1843 brought about a revival of Owenite socialism in that country. The Society of One-Mentians (Pennsylvania), the Goose Pond Community (Pennsylvania) and the Colony of Equality (Wisconsin), were founded by Owenites in 1843, but had all collapsed by 1846, and their demise marks the end of an organized Owenite socialist movement in America.
1845. With the ending of Queenwood, the New Moral World, and the central Owenite organization, the Owenite socialist movement

in Britain disintegrated.

1846 - 1858. Owenite socialism no longer existed as an organized social movement, although Robert Owen continued to write and to propagate his views. Many of Owen's followers were absorbed into other social movements of the time, such as the consumers cooperative, secularist, or Christian socialist movements.

1858. Death of Robert Owen.

Appendix B

BIOGRAPHIC INDEX OF THE MAJOR FIGURES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

ASHURST, William H. (1792-1855).

b. London. Solicitor; patron of Robert Owen and his followers; supported Italy and other radical causes; helped Holyoake formulate his version of secularism; used the pseudonym 'Edward Search' in his writings for secularism. His home was a salon for the friends of all liberal causes.

BENTHAM, Jeremy (1748-1832).

Philosopher; originally studied law and practiced it briefly; founded the philosophy of utilitarianism, propounding the view that the individual's pursuit of happiness leads to social good as well. He felt that virtue could be established by law. Among his most famous works are Principles of Morals and Legislation and The Limits of Jurisprudence Defined.

BUCHANAN, Robert (1813-1866).

Scottish weaver-schoolmaster and Owenite; appointed as a social missionary to Manchester in 1838. He later returned to Glasgow, where he edited a local paper. He was the author of several Owenite works.

CARLILE, Richard (1790-1843).

b. Ashburton. Settled in London as a journeyman tinsmith, 1813; published the Republican, 1819-1826, and the works of Paine; imprisoned, 1817, 1819-25, 1832-33, 1834; advocated materialistic atheism after c. 1821, but was converted to an allegorical interpretation of Christianity c. 1834; took out licence to preach, and attacked both Owenites and Chartists.

CHILTON, William (1815-1855).

b. Bristol. Started as a bricklayer, but became a compositor and then a reader on the Bristol Mercury; member of the Bristol branch of the socialists; a founder and sub-editor of the Oracle of Reason; regular contributor to freethought journals on biology, geology, etc.

COBBETT, William (1762-1835).

Radical politician and writer who had an extremely varied career. During the 1790s he was in the United States, where he published loyalist propaganda; returned to England in 1800 and soon became a radical pamphleteer; M.P. for Oldham from 1832 to 1835.

ETZLER, J.A.

American reformer who preached the necessity of using mechanical slaves driven by natural forces to supplant the labour of man, in a system of cooperative communities. Visited England c. 1840. His chief work was The Paradise Within the Reach of All Men, Without Labour, by Powers of Nature and Machinery (1833).

FOURIER, Francois Marie Charles (1772-1837).

French social scientist and reformer, b. Besancon. Devoted himself to study of society and methods of improving social and economic conditions; published (1808) Theorie des Quatre Mouvements et des Destinées Generales, advocating a cooperative organization of society into phalansteries, each one large enough to allow for industrial and social needs of the group. Fourierism, as his proposed system was called, made a strong appeal to many thoughtful people and a number of attempts were made to organize as he suggested. Brook Farm in the U.S. was a famous example of Fourieristic experiment.

HAMILTON, Archibald J. (1793-1834).

Son and heir of General John Hamilton, the laird of Dalzell and Orbiston; entered army at age of eighteen, seeing active service in the Napoleonic wars as a lieutenant. Becoming critical of the army and of war, he retired to devote himself to agriculture, studied agricultural theory, and experimented with methods of soil cultivation at Dalzell. Was a supporter of political reform, an opponent of established religion, and acquainted with many radicals. Attracted to Owenism through his role as an improving landlord; was one of Robert Owen's most ardent supporters and remained so until his death; involved in various socialist projects, including Orbiston, of which he was one of the prime movers.

HOLYOAKE, George J. (1817-1906).

b. Birmingham. A whitesmith; educated at the mechanics' institute; Owenite lecturer at Worcester, 1840, Sheffield, 1841-42, London, 1843, and Glasgow, 1845; imprisoned for blasphemy, 1842-43; freethought lecturer and writer; edited the Oracle of Reason, 1841-43, and the Reasoner, 1846-1861; creator of the secularist movement in the 1850s; chartist; acting secretary of the Garibaldi Committee, 1861; prominent cooperative propagandist and radical agitator.

JENNINGS, Robert L.

Former Universalist minister from Philadelphia, turned freethinker; converted to Owenism and played a prominent part at New Harmony as teacher, lecturer, and editor of New Harmony Gazette; President of the Franklin Community (New York), 1826; moved to New York City, 1829; co-editor of the Free Enquirer.

JONES, Patrick Lloyd (1811-1886).

b. Cork. Fustian cutter; came to Liverpool, then Manchester; converted to Owenism and helped found the Salford cooperative store, 1831, and run the schools there; appointed as a social missionary, 1837; settled in London after 1846; a moderate chartist; started the Spirit of the Age, 1849; attracted to Christian Socialism; leading advocate of the cooperative movement.

KNOWLTON, Charles (1800-1850).

American physician and advocate of birth control; author of Fruits of Philosophy (1832); prosecuted and imprisoned for three months at Cambridge, Mass., 1832; book made subject of a test case in England, 1877.

MALTHUS, Thomas R. (1766-1834).

Economist and clergyman. He is remembered for his Essay on the Principle of Population, in which he set forth the doctrine that poverty is unavoidable since population tends to increase out of proportion to the means of supporting that population. He held that wars, famines, and restraint were actually necessary in order to prevent overpopulation.

MILL, James (1773-1836).

Philosopher and economist who was a close friend and collaborator of Bentham. His works include An Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind and Elements of Political Economy. His most famous book, on which he worked for twelve years, is A History of India.

MILL, John Stuart (1806-1873).

Philosopher, economist and politician who was the son of James Mill. He was a prolific writer and briefly a member of Parliament for Westminster, 1865-1868. In his longer works, he systematized and humanized the utilitarian philosophy of his father and Bentham. He was also an exponent of the empirical method of Locke. His major works include A System of Logic, Principles of Political Economy, Utilitarianism, On Representative Government, his Autobiography and On Liberty, a classic defence of human freedom.

MORGAN, John Minter (1782-1854).

Owenite philanthropist. Inherited a fortune from his father (a London wholesale stationer); was among the first to defend Owen's views and subsequently wrote popular expositions of Owenism; subscriber to Orbiston and a trusted adviser at the cooperative congresses in the 1830s; became well known in his later years for his tireless advocacy of his plan for a Christian community; reconciled Owenite beliefs with membership of the Church of England.

MORRISON, James (1802-1835).

b. Newcastle. Apprenticed as a printer and grainer; by 1831 he was married and living in Birmingham, where he became active in workers education, the cooperative movement and the unstamped press agitation. He was a member of the Painters' Union (one of the constituents of the Builders' Union), and worked actively to swing the Builders' Union towards Owenism. Early in 1834 he moved to London, where he continued to edit his journal, the Pioneer, begun in Birmingham in September 1833. With the collapse of the G.N.C.T.U., his journal came to an end in July 1834, and he died suddenly of brain fever in August 1835, leaving a widow and five young children, for whom a charitable subscription was raised. His wife, Frances Morrison, was also an Owenite and in 1838-39 lectured in Owenite institutions in Lancashire and the North. Her work entitled The Influence of the Present Marriage System was published in 1838.

O'BRIEN, James, later James Bronterre (1805-1864).

Irish journalist and chartist; one of the best informed of the chartists; advocated revolutionary violence; imprisoned for seditious speaking.

O'CONNOR, Feargus E. (1794-1855).

Irish chartist leader; M.P.; unseated as radical through Daniel O'Connell's influence; joined chartists in England; advocated rise of physical violence in his paper, the Northern Star; presented the monster chartist petition in Parliament, 1848.

OWEN, Robert (1771-1858).

b. Newtown. Rapid social advancement through the cotton trade; assumed control of the New Lanark Mills, 1800; became internationally famous for his work there; increasingly absorbed in social problems; denounced religious influences in A New View of Society (1812-14) and in his London tavern speeches, 1817; outlined a plan for communities in his Report to the County of Lanark (1821); inspired communitarian and cooperative efforts by working men; his major communities were New Harmony, Indiana, 1825-27 and Queenwood, Hampshire, 1839-45.

OWEN, Robert Dale (1800-1877).

Eldest son of Robert Owen. Went to New Harmony, 1825; taught school and edited New Harmony Gazette; became a United States citizen, 1827; edited the Free Enquirer with Frances Wright, 1828-1832; elected to the House of Representatives, 1842; U.S. Minister in Naples, 1853-58; advocate of emancipation of slaves, 1858-63.

PLACE, Francis (1771-1854).

Journeyman leather-breeches maker; led successful campaign to repeal legislation forbidding trade unionism, 1814-24; campaigned against national sinking-fund, 1816-23; took important part in agitation for Reform bill of 1832; author of pamphlets and articles on social and economic questions; drafted the National or People's charter the form of an act of Parliament setting forth the platform of the chartists, 1838.

RYALL, Malthus Q. (c. 1809-1846).

Member of the Lambeth socialist branch. The son of an engraver, or perhaps an engraver himself; worked as an advertising agent; spent what money he had in the cause of freethought; helped with the Oracle of Reason and was secretary of the Anti-Persecution Union, 1842; lived with a woman who was not his wife, and adopted her children as his own; died in poverty.

SAINT-SIMON, Claude Henri, Comte de (1760-1825).

French philosopher and social scientist, b. Paris. Served (1777-83) as volunteer in French troops fighting with Americans in American Revolution. On return to France, 1783, amassed fortune by land speculation and then lost it all in his various experiments. Developed his social theories in a series of treatises, including L'Industrie ou

Discussions Politiques, Morales et Philosophiques... (1817), Systeme Industriel (1820-23), Nouveau Christianisme (1825). His theories were developed by his disciples into a system known as Saint-Simonianism. He is regarded as founder of French socialism.

SKIDMORE, Thomas (d. 1832).

Machinist and journalist; agrarian reformer; proposed plan for the renewed division of property in each generation; opponent of Robert Dale Owen for leadership of the New York Workingmen's Party; author of The Rights of Man to Property (1829).

SMITH, James E. (shepherd) (1801-1857).

A scot, reared in strict Calvinist discipline; obtained degree from Glasgow University, 1818; spent several years as a private tutor and visiting preacher; became involved with various millennial movements; became an Owenite lecturer and editor of Crisis, 1833-34; broke with Owen over Smiths' advocacy of militant syndicalism; edited the Shepherd, 1834-35, 1837-38, which combined religious millennialism and social radicalism; associated with Fourierism in the early 1840s; started the Family Herald, 1842, his most successful journalistic venture.

SOUTHWELL, Charles (1814-1860).

b. London. Freethought lecturer and Owenite social missionary; published the Oracle of Reason, 1841, and sentenced to 12 months in prison and a fine for blasphemy, 1842; edited the Investigator, 1843, and the Lancashire Beacon, 1849; emigrated to New Zealand, 1856; edited a Wesleyan Magazine without declaring his views.

THOMPSON, William (1785?-1833).

Irish landowner and political economist; student of Bentham's utilitarianism; enthusiastic supporter of Robert Owen's cooperative system; author of An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth (1824).

WHEELER, Anna (b. 1785).

Youngest daughter of the famous Irish Protestant divine, Archbishop Doyle; spent childhood in rural Ireland; at age of fifteen, married Francis Massy Wheeler, a grandson of the second Lord Massy and a hopeless alcoholic; bore six children within twelve years, all but two dying in infancy; marriage broke up in 1812; became interested in progressive movements in France and England; a well-known figure in radical circles; most strongly influenced by Owenism.

WOLLSTONECRAFT, Mary (1759-1797).

English author; married William Godwin, 1797, and died on birth of their daughter Mary (second wife of Shelley). Author of Vindication on the Rights of Women (1792), a plain-spoken attack on conventions.

WOOLER, Thomas (1786-1853).

Radical politician and journalist; editor of the Statesman; later edited the Black Dwarf, which from 1817-24 was the most influential radical journal, using satire to attack the government; imprisoned, 1819, but continued to edit his journal from gaol; later edited the British Gazette.

WRIGHT, Frances (1795-1852).

Reformer and Owenite. b. Dundee, Scotland. First toured U.S., 1818-20, and wrote book Views on Society and Manners in America (1821); again toured U.S., accompanying Lafayette, 1824 ; in New Harmony; started own community at Nashoba (Tennessee) during mid 1820s as project to emancipate slaves; settled in New York City, 1829 , and scandalized contemporary America by appearing on the lecture platform attacking religion, the existing system of education, and defending equal rights for women and a system based on moral obligation only. Married William Phiquepal D'Arusmont, 1831, but later divorced him; continued on lecture platform, discussing birth control, emancipation of women, more equal distribution of wealth, emancipation of slaves and their colonization outside U.S. Was an important influence on securing free public schools in U.S.